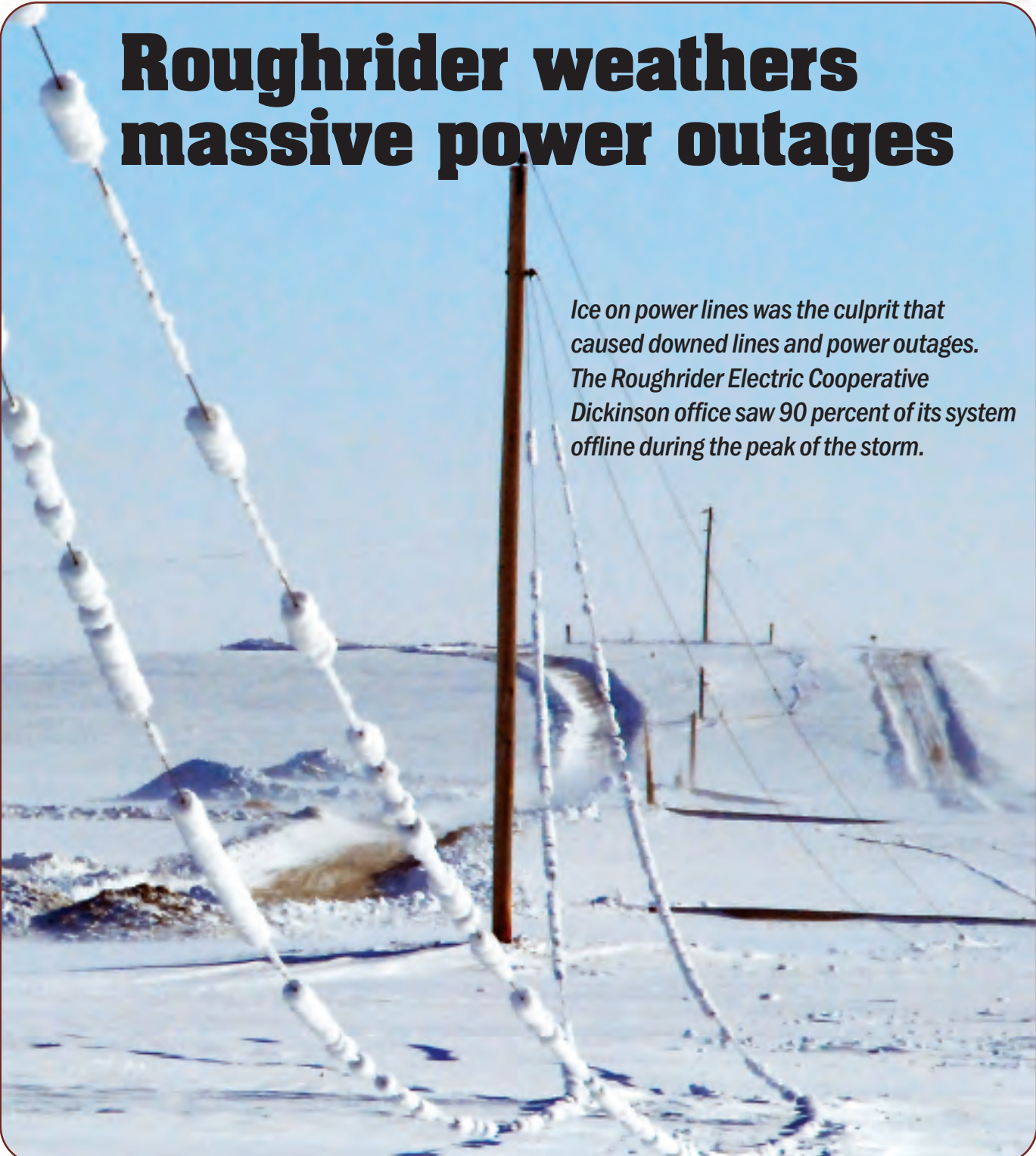


Roughrider weathers massive power outages



Ice on power lines was the culprit that caused downed lines and power outages. The Roughrider Electric Cooperative Dickinson office saw 90 percent of its system offline during the peak of the storm.



Dedicated employees and communities pull together during massive power outages

Lineworkers used snowmobiles and four-wheelers to assess damage and fix outages during the January storm that disrupted power throughout the Roughrider Electric Cooperative service area.

by Karlene Gehring

While people gaze out their windows on a frosty morning and see a beautiful display of nature, people who work for Roughrider Electric Cooperative cringe. They know the frost covering trees, fences and virtually everything outside, is also coating electrical wires making those lines up to 200 percent heavier – and heavier lines mean broken lines, broken poles and power outages.

Roughrider Electrical Cooperative continues to deal with the storm that swept through North Dakota the third week of January. It was a situation, Simon Kuntz, Roughrider Electric Cooperative line superintendent and chief of staff for the Dickinson office, said he has not seen in his 39 years with the co-op.

Leonard Hibl, Roughrider Electric Cooperative members services, said, “We’ve had storms where certain areas go out, but not the whole area. This

affected almost the whole southwestern part of the state. It limits the help you can get in.”

As Roughrider employees helplessly watched ice form on power lines, they knew it was only a matter of time before trouble started.

“Through his years of experience, Simon had a gut feeling and knew things were going to be bad, so he started ordering poles,” Hibl said. “We were very fortunate we had 90 poles in storage, ready to go.”

It was none too soon as the first sign of power disruptions began Jan. 19 when calls started coming in from the Belfield area. The ice was weighing down the wires and they were eventually snapping, which in turn was bringing down electrical poles.

“It’s like a domino effect,” Kuntz said. The crew out of Dickinson, which includes 11 lineworkers covering 96 townships in just less than a 4,000-square-mile area, was called out Tuesday night and continued

through Wednesday.

“Some of the people were out of power for 24 hours straight,” Kuntz said. “By Wednesday afternoon, we really understood that things were getting out of control and we were not able to keep up with our manpower.” The crews shut down on Wednesday night about 11 p.m.

“We needed to re-group, get some sleep and go from there,” Kuntz said. The cooperative then began the efforts of bringing in crews to help. As Hibl said, “We couldn’t pull anyone in from the east [Hazen] Roughrider because they had their own issues. ... This was a regional event, so help had to be brought in from way outside.”

But bringing in help took time, as Michael’s Power sent crews from Washington and Wisconsin. Their arrival was delayed due to road closures brought about by the storm. Until that time, the Dickinson Roughrider crew worked to deal with 90 percent of the system down.

Kuntz said Friday the visibility was so bad crews were brought in and worked in the shop in preparation for when they could resume in the field.

"We tried to keep Dickinson on," he said. "Saturday we worked our way all directions out of Dickinson."

Kuntz added, "We found out we were putting up wire and they were coming down by the time we got back to re-set the breaker."

By Sunday, the first crew of contractors arrived and Monday brought the realization that 40 more people were needed. Along with Michael's Power, Roughrider received help from North Central Electric Cooperative, Bottineau; Verendrye Electric Cooperative, Velva; 3C Construction; and Coal Creek Construction.

Replacing the fallen wires and poles and re-routing lines was a long, arduous process. Kuntz explained that lineworkers had to get to the area to determine the problems. Then there was the snow to deal with, as equipment was brought in to move snow so the crews could get to the locations.

"The biggest issue was getting to the poles because of the snow," he said. "All of the counties volunteered equipment to help us get roads open into lines."

Kuntz added, "In some places, we had four different contractors plus the county. ... Snow removal takes time. There were tremendous amounts of snow that had to be moved."

The oil companies in the area also helped with snow removal, understanding that the cooperative's first mission was restoring power to residences.

Hibl explained that residences take priority over commercial accounts and the oil companies were very supportive of the co-op.

"They [oil companies] understand the priorities and they were helping us," he said. "They sent their snow removal crews to help us get power to homes. They want to be good neighbors."

Crews worked 18-hour days to get the power on for Roughrider Electric Cooperative members. Starting at 6 a.m. each morning, they were out in the elements until 9 or 10 p.m.

It was difficult for the lineworkers, Kuntz said, as they would fix a line and then a little gust of wind would come and the line and poles



Tim Volk, Roughrider Electric Cooperative linemen supervisor, Hazen office, saw his office become storm central. On his office wall, a map of the eastern coverage area was dotted with Post-it notes detailing power outages in the area. The cooperative devised a color-coded system that helped bring a visual order to outages.

would come down.

"You're always fighting Mother Nature," he said. "It was frustrating, very frustrating. You gain nothing and whatever you've done, you've lost."

Kuntz added, "You're totally helpless. You know there are families out there without electricity. Trying to keep people on – that's our mission. That's the service we provide. But Mother Nature has total control of what we can do and can't do. But they [the lineworkers] were still out there trying."

It wasn't easy, as Hibl said lineworkers in the Gladstone area walked a mile in deep snow, trying to restore the power. In addition, there were many areas where snow prevented the crews from using the trucks with buckets, which meant lineworkers were climbing bent and swaying poles in an effort to restore power.

Basically, the crews were working

and sleeping with not much time left for their families.

"They probably didn't see their kids," Kuntz said. "By the time they got home, the kids were in bed and when they'd leave in the morning, the kids would still be in bed."

Wives and others helped the cooperative too, by handling the increased volume of phone calls. Kuntz said the storm began to subside by Tuesday, Jan. 26, as lineworkers continued to assess the damage and restore power.

By the time power was restored, some cooperative members had been without power for seven days. Kuntz said the Gorham and Fairfield areas were some of the last to have power restored.

"They had the most damage over their transmission line," he said. When the call was received that the



The winds decreased, but Roughrider lineworkers continued to travel on snowmobiles in an effort to get to damaged areas.

transmission line was down, Roughrider employees went out in a plane to locate the damage.

Hibl explained that the quickest way to survey and find the damage in some areas was to follow the line with a plane. After determining the problem, the co-op dispatched lineworkers on snowmobiles to repair the damage.

Kuntz said snowmobiles were an integral part of locating line problems during the storm. It wasn't rare for the patrol to find three poles down in an area, and when crews arrived, there would be five more down.

Kuntz and Hibl can't say enough about the employees who worked diligently through the storm, agreeing, "You need good people to cover this."

Kuntz added, "It [power outage] may not have been a short period of time for people out of power, but when you look at the whole picture, it was a short amount of time considering everything they [crews] had to do to accomplish [restoring power to members]."

Hibl and Kuntz also agree the

cooperative's members were very supportive and understanding. Baked goods were often left at the office, while people also offered to make meals and help with snow removal. "The farmers were so supportive," Hibl said.

Also arriving at the Roughrider office was a stack of thank-you letters written by area elementary students.

But plenty of work still remains, as Kuntz said downed wires and poles remain on the ground. Many of the lines were re-routed in an effort to restore power, and crews continue to work in an effort to bring everything back to normal.

Hibl warned snowmobilers and others that many poles and dead wires still remain on the ground, covered by snow. He explained that the cooperative will not be able to remove some of the broken poles until spring arrives and the snow melts.

Over to the east in the Mercer County and Oliver County areas, Roughrider Electric Cooperative employees dealt

with the same problems.

Tim Volk, Roughrider Electric Cooperative linemen supervisor for the Hazen office, said calls began coming in from consumers in the rural areas, saying the lines were galloping. "We knew we had trouble and something was going to happen," he said.

Volk explained that when ice begins to form on the power lines, the lines begin to sag. A slight wind, as little as 5 miles per hour, will push the bottom wire up. When the wind dies down, the wire drops down.

"It's like throwing a rock in a pond. That wave will cause one ripple that causes another," he explained. "It's like that with the wire. It goes up and down, and it looks like it's galloping."

It was Jan. 20 at 2 a.m. when the first crews went out with power outages due to frost and the extra weight on the lines.

The seven-man line crew worked to keep up with the outages and damages. Volk said the first two nights the lineworkers had some long nights trying

to restore power.

"When the storm first came in, we were trying to go everywhere, route lines and save everything. We got everyone on as quick as we could because that's what we do," he said. "When things started getting worse, we realized we had to get into emergency mode."

Volk added, "Calling around, we knew when things started coming apart. Lines were falling down, broken poles, cross-arms down, leaning poles. When we started getting those calls, we knew we were in for the long haul." For the eastern Roughrider area, the damage followed a path south of Center, south of Hannover, south of Hazen and south of Beulah.

"We were on the northern end of the storm and everything went west," Volk explained.

He added there were sporadic outages toward Pick City and north of Zap.

When the calls about downed lines and poles started, Volk said he estimated the amount of supplies to order. With a supply of poles on-site, the decision was made to order two semi truck loads of poles right away.

Volk said he started making calls Saturday for supplies, and although many businesses were closed, the cooperative had a list of contractors they could contact. The contractors were put on stand-by until the co-op could get a handle on where the

problems were located.

Shifting into their emergency plan, contractors were called into Mercer and Oliver counties. Volk explained that during an emergency, the cooperative works to restore power to the greatest number of residents.

"We concentrate crews on a certain area to get as many people on at one time," he explained. "We can send out a four-man crew to work four hours to get 50 people on—even though they drive by and see a line down, they can't stop to put that line up to get one house online."

He added, "In an emergency, we start at the main substations and work our way out from there."

Like the lineworkers to the west, lineworkers out of the Hazen office dealt with the frustration of trying to get to the damaged areas.

"Physically, we have to go out and find out what the problem is," Volk said. "We have fault indicators that tell us the area; then we have to send out the crews—and the roads were blocked."

But the counties stepped in and began moving snow to help the crews get to the areas.

"Mercer and Oliver counties were absolutely fantastic," Volk said. "The road crews called us every morning and asked where to go next. They bent over backwards."

But when visibility due to the storm

caused road crews to pull the plows, Roughrider lineworkers were left to break their own trails in an effort to restore power.

They went out on snowmobiles and a call was made to the Mercer County Sheriff's Office with a request to use the Mercer County Search and Rescue Team's ATV with tracks. Volk said the ATV was a blessing and a major factor in restoring power to 50 to 75 people.

"Without it, they [members] would have waited a couple days because we didn't have anything to go out on," said Volk.

At times, crews were driving 15 miles per hour to get to trouble spots, with Volk saying it took one crew an hour to get to Center due to weather conditions.

Roughrider Electric Cooperative out of the Hazen office serves 58 townships with 3,000 miles of power lines. Eighteen townships and 400 to 500 miles of line were affected by the storm.

Monday, Feb. 1, when there was an outage on the transmission line that supplies power to Hazen, Beulah and Stanton, nearly 50 percent of the area was without power for about a half-hour.

The same contractors that were brought into the Dickinson area also moved into the Hazen area to help with repairs. As those repairs were made, three lineworkers from the Hazen area





With hundreds of wire breaks and stranded wire, Roughrider Electric will be dealing with the storm damage far into the future. The co-op warns snowmobilers and others to travel with care in ditches, as poles, cross arms and dead wires may still be buried under the snow.

were sent to Killdeer to help Roughrider's western division.

Volk also credited local businesses for their help as cafés opened at 5:30 a.m. so lineworkers could eat before they went into the field.

"They bent over backwards for us," he said.

Volk also can't give enough praise to the local lineworkers as he said, "It's a dangerous business, but you don't take risks. When the blizzard hits and we were not getting anything done, they were on-site working to get things ready."

Volk said even when the decision was made to pull the crews in due to the weather, they still headed out in an effort to restore power to members. "They went out and got it back on," he said. "They were fixing wires off the snowmobiles."

Volk added, "It takes a totally different breed to be a lineman and climb a pole in a blizzard. ... They are a dedicated crew. It's their system and they babysit it and maintain it. When

the backbone is broken, you want to heal it."

Top-of-the-line equipment is also a must when it comes to keeping power going to members.

"We need reliable equipment for what we just went through," Volk said. "It pays off."

Although within days the sun was shining and normal weather returned, Volk said Roughrider's system is far from being back to normal.

The first week of February, lineworkers were on snowmobiles doing line patrol in the affected areas, checking every inch of line and pole coming out of the substation.

With the line patrol surveying the damaged area, Volk said the number of poles the cooperative lost during the storm is inching close to 200.

"We determined we had 140 poles on the ground, but yesterday [Feb. 7] we found 17 more," Volk said.

For Roughrider, the damage from the storm is far from over. With hundreds of wire breaks and stranded wire, the



cooperative will be dealing with the storm damage far into the future. Volk also warned snowmobilers and others to take care in the rural areas. He said poles, cross arms and dead wires are buried in the ditches.

"We can't get to them because of the snow," he said. "It's not feasible to do it right now. In some areas, we have to move six to seven feet of snow to get down to where the lines are." Volk added, "Clean-up will take a long time."

REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jan. 29

When, where and who: The board of directors and managers met in Beulah Jan. 29.

Recurring items: The board approved the agenda, minutes and financial reports.

Storm update: The recent storm caused considerable damage to Roughrider's distribution system. This is one of the worst storms the state has experienced. It covered such a wide area that there were no spare resources from one area to help another. So many power lines came down that availability of replacement poles is a serious concern. The storm will delay previously scheduled construction for 2010. The current estimate of damage to the electric system plant alone is \$2.5 to \$3.5 million. The unplanned impact on the Roughrider budget is currently estimated to be \$500,000 to \$1 million, depending upon what expenses are eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reimbursement. The vast majority of consumers were patient and resourceful throughout the difficult time. With few exceptions, comments from consumers have been positive, expressing deep appreciation for the hard work being done.

Cash flow management line of credit: The need to put a line of credit in place to help deal with cash-flow issues was discussed.

3C Construction LLC (3C): Management reported on a meeting held which finalized the purchase of a one-third interest in 3C by Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative.

Property review: The former West Plains Electric Cooperative, Inc. old headquarters was used as a dining hall for crew members from other states helping with storm reconstruction.

Construction projects: Due to storm-related work, all regular projects are on hold.

Consolidation progress: The board has standardized almost all rates throughout Roughrider and most of the employee and management policies are coordinated and complete.

Upper Missouri membership: There was extensive discussion about the diversity savings to be gained and costs to be incurred should Roughrider become a member of Upper Missouri.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative report: The Basin Electric report was reviewed.

Content of board minutes: The format of the minutes for Roughrider and various methods of recording the actions of the board were discussed.

2010 operating budget: Rates changes will go into effect Jan. 1.

Nominating committee: There will be a meeting in Hazen on March 5 and Dickinson on March 24. The committee as presently constituted includes: William Emmil, Rodney Syminow, Sandra Fisher, Ted Reich, Lynn Selle, Donald Cline, Richard Hauck, Gordon Ficek, Eugene Sailer, Carol Stolberg and Tony Aman.

Fire alarm system: An estimate for a detection/alarm system for Roughrider's facilities was reviewed.

Statewide director: Dan Price was elected to serve as director on the Statewide board.

Upcoming meetings: Discussed and arranged attendance at various meetings. The next board meeting will be Feb. 26 in Dickinson.

Other business: There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Mark your calendars for the ANNUAL MEETING

Roughrider Electric Cooperative will hold its annual meeting Wednesday, June 2, at the Hazen High School gym.

FREE SHUTTLE BUS RIDE

Roughrider Electric will be offering a FREE shuttle-bus service to the meeting, leaving from the Dickinson main office. If you are interested in riding the bus to Dickinson, please contact Debbie Lorz at 701-483-5111 or 800-627-8470. You may also e-mail Debbie at: dlorz@roughriderelectric.com.

Look for the annual meeting report in the May issue of North Dakota LIVING.



ROUGH RIDER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

TO: All Members

FROM: Alliance Co-Managers Clayton O. Hoffman and Donald A. Franklund

SUBJECT: Nomination Process

To comply with USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS) requirements, we must provide each member with a summary of the bylaws on the nomination process prior to the nomination of candidates for board positions. Following is the bylaw section on nominations:

SECTION 4. Nominations. (a) A Nominating Committee shall be selected by the Board of Directors in time for its first meeting to be held before the annual meeting of members in 2009 and for each annual meeting of members thereafter. The Nominating Committee shall consist of an equal number of members from each of the Cooperative's Districts and a minimum of two members from each district shall be selected. No member of the Board of Directors may serve on the Nominating Committee. The Board of Directors shall establish rules for the conduct of and arrange for the meeting of the Nominating Committee. The Secretary shall notify the members of the Nominating Committee in the manner provided by Article II, Section 4 delivered at least 15 days before the date set for the Committee meeting. From and after 2009, the Nominating Committee shall meet at least 60 days before the annual meeting of members to nominate at least one qualified candidate for each directorship for which there is a vacancy to be filled by a vote of the members. Upon conclusion of the meeting, the Nominating Committee shall cause a list of nominees for Directors to be posted at the principal office of the Cooperative.

(b) By petition, any 15 or more members of the same district acting together may make other nominations for each directorship in that district for which there is a vacancy to be filled by a vote of the members, provided that the petition is filed with the Secretary not less than 30 days prior to the annual meeting of members. The Secretary shall cause to be posted such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the committee is posted.

(c) The Secretary shall cause to be mailed, with the notice of the annual meeting of members, or separately but at least 15 days before the date of the meeting, a statement of the number of Directors to be elected and the names and addresses of the candidates, specifying separately the nominations made by the Nominating Committee and also the nominations made by petition, if any.

(d) Unless voting by mail for directorships has been approved, the President, acting as Chairman of the meeting, shall invite additional nominations from the floor and nominations shall not be closed until a reasonable time has passed during which no additional nominations have been made. No member may nominate more than one candidate at any single annual meeting of members.

The nominating committee appointed by the Board consists of: **William Emmil**, New England; **Ted Reich**, Beulah; **Donald Cline**, Beulah; **Gordon Ficek**, Dickinson; **Lynn Selle**, Halliday; **Reinhardt Hauck**, Dunn Center; **Rodney Syminow**, Belfield; **Eugene Sailer**, Zap; and **Sandra Fisher**, Center. The committee meeting is scheduled for March 5 in Hazen.

If you have any questions concerning nominations, feel free to contact anyone on the nominating committee or please call our office for information.

CASH THOSE CHECKS

A reminder to Roughrider Electric Cooperative members: Please cash your capital credit check if you have not done so.



OFFICE CLOSING: The offices of Roughrider Electric will be closed Good Friday, April 2.



HAZEN OFFICE

800 Highway Drive, Hazen, ND 58545-4737
Office hours 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone (701) 748-2293 or (800) 748-5533

For emergencies and after-hours call:

(701) 748-2293 for local calls and (800) 748-5533 for long-distance calls

Payments may be deposited in the deposit box by the main entrance at the Roughrider Electric's office or in the drop-off box located at Krause's Super Valu in Hazen or Bronson's Super Valu in Beulah.

DICKINSON OFFICE

P.O. Box 1038, 2156 4th Ave. E.
Dickinson, ND 58602-1038
Office Hours 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Phone (701) 483-5111 or (800) 627-8470

For emergencies and after-hours call:

(701) 483-5111 for local calls and (800) 627-8470

Payments may be deposited in the deposit box west of the main entrance door at the Roughrider Electric's office or in the drop-off box located at Dickinson City Hall, and Dan's Supermarket (both locations).

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

William Retterath, President—Center	794-8729
Dean Oe, Vice President—Belfield	575-4594
Ervin Binstock, Secretary—Dickinson	579-4120
Darell Herman, Treasurer—Beulah	873-4371
Roger Kudrna, Dickinson	483-8377
Dan Price, Hensler	794-3779
Gary Scheid, Hazen.....	748-2250
David Swenson, Halliday	938-4521
Bruce Darcy, Golden Valley	983-4222
Greg Steckler, Dunn Center	548-8122
Troy Sailer, Golden Valley.....	948-2427

Innovative Energy Alliance, LLC

Clayton Hoffman, Manager	748-6087 or 880-1312
Don Franklund, Manager	426-3918

EMPLOYEES

Leonard Hibi	Dir. of Member Services, Dickinson
Brad Quenette.....	Member Services Advisor, Hazen
Deborah Zillich.....	Dir. of Finance and Admin., Dickinson
Steve Hildebrand	Member Services Asst./ Work Order Representative, Hazen
Jackie Kovash.....	Accounting Coordinator, Dickinson
Laurie Miller	Billing Coordinator, Hazen
Debbie Lorz	Admin. Representative, Dickinson
Jen Gruebele	Accounting/Billing Rep., Dickinson
Julie Dukart	Customer Service Rep., Dickinson
Kayla Fandich	Part-time receptionist, Hazen
Simon Kuntz.....	Line Superintendent, Dickinson
Bill Gress	Operations Manager, Hazen
Tim Volk	Line Superintendent, Hazen
Lynn Cherney	Working Foreman, Dickinson
Tim Ridl	Working Foreman, Dickinson
Bryan Braun.....	Working Foreman, Dickinson
Dennis Kinzell	Lead Lineworker, Hazen
Chad Hysjulien	Journeyman Lineworker, Dickinson
Kevin Randle.....	Journeyman Lineworker, Hazen
Dale Ficek.....	Journeyman Lineworker, Dickinson
Jim Block	Working Foreman, Hazen
Wayne Schmaltz.....	Journeyman Lineworker, Hazen
Billy J. Kummer.....	Journeyman Lineworker, Dickinson
Scott Leintz	Journeyman Lineworker, Hazen
Dion Gefre	Journeyman Lineworker, Dickinson
Russell Walters.....	Journeyman Lineworker, Hazen
Brock Swensrud	Journeyman Lineworker, Dickinson
Tony Kordonowy.....	Apprentice Lineman, Dickinson
Zach Maershecker	Apprentice Lineman, Dickinson
Gerald Krebs.....	Staking Engineer, Dickinson
Bruce Buchert.....	Electric Technician/Meter Technician
Cory Halter	Lead Meter Technician, Dickinson
Larry Rosenau	Radio/Engineering Technician
Nick Schafer.....	Warehouseman/Technician, Hazen
Bryce Jurgenson	Warehouse Supervisor, Dickinson
Claud Privratsky.....	Maintenance/Custodian, Dickinson
Russel Goodwin.....	Electrician Foreman, Hazen
Lance Peterson	Journeyman Electrician, Hazen
Jorden Pfliger	Journeyman Electrician, Hazen
Adam Wilkens	Apprentice Lineman, Hazen
Jason Obenauer	Plumber, Hazen
Brent Hysjulien	Service Center Representative, Hazen