

Connections



October 2026

Local Voices Shape Local Solutions

October is National Co-op Month

By Abby Berry, NRECA

When you hear the word cooperative, what comes to mind? As your local electric co-op, we hope you think of South Central Electric Association.

Regardless of the services offered, all cooperatives have one thing in common: they're led by the people they serve—and that simple idea makes a meaningful difference.

Cooperatives come in all shapes and sizes, each created to meet a specific need. Credit unions help members save and borrow money. Producer cooperatives, like Ocean Spray and Land O'Lakes, help farmers bring their products to market. Retail cooperatives, like REI and ACE Hardware, are owned by their shoppers or a membership of store owners, while housing cooperatives give residents a voice in managing their communities. And utility cooperatives—like SCE provide reliable electricity to the communities they serve.

Unlike many businesses that answer to outside investors or shareholders, cooperatives are built for their members. Their goal isn't simply to earn a profit—it's to provide value, meet unique local needs and strengthen the communities they call home.

That's exactly what makes SCE different.

Our story began in 1937 when neighbors came together to bring electricity to an area when other utilities wouldn't. While a lot has changed since then, our purpose has remained steady. We're still here to provide power and make decisions with our community's best interests in mind.

Being locally owned means we have the flexibility to focus on what matters most to the communities we serve. That's why no two electric cooperatives are exactly alike. Every community has different needs, and every cooperative reflects those priorities.

For some co-ops, that means expanding programs that help members save energy and money. Others may focus on supporting economic development, investing in new technology or creating new opportunities for local students.

You'll also find the co-op difference in the little things. It's the lineworkers restoring power after a storm. The employees answering your questions when you call. The team members volunteering at community events. The board members and your neighbors are who help guide decisions for the future.

We're your neighbor and local energy partner, and we're committed to serving this community for generations to come.

This National Co-op Month, we invite you to join us in celebrating the cooperative difference, because this co-op belongs to you.

Whether it's South Central Electric Association, your local credit union or ACE Hardware, cooperatives prove that when people work together, everyone benefits.

Your membership is what makes our mission possible and it's what keeps us focused on serving the people and communities that matter most.



*Small Change...
Big Impact!*

South Central Electric Trust Seeking Applications for Fall Funding Cycle

Are you part of a local organization that helps improve the lives of residents in Watonwan, Cottonwood, or Martin counties? If so, your organization may be eligible to receive funding from the South Central Electric Association Trust.

The Trust distributes funds contributed by South Central Electric members through the Operation Round Up program. An independent Trust Board, made up of South Central Electric members, reviews funding requests and awards grants to qualifying organizations.

Since the program began in 2015, the South Central Electric Trust has provided more than \$156,000 in support to local organizations and student scholarship programs.

The Trust Board is now accepting applications for its **Fall 2026 funding cycle**. Organizations that serve area seniors, support education, provide emergency response services, offer community programs, or carry out other charitable activities are encouraged to apply.

The application deadline is **October 29, 2026**.

Applications can be downloaded from the **Operation Round Up** page under the **Community** tab at www.southcentralelectric.com. To request an application by phone, contact South Central Electric at **507-375-3164**.

power supply and markets for Great River Energy. “By maintaining a balanced portfolio and participating in regional markets, we’re able to support system reliability while also delivering financial benefits back to our membership.”



Tree Responsibility and Power-Line Clearance

Trees located on your property remain your responsibility. The cooperative trims trees and maintains proper clearance from power lines; however, we do not remove an entire tree simply because it is growing near a power line.

When planting a new tree, choose a location that is a safe distance from power lines. Consider the tree’s mature height and spread to help prevent future conflicts with utility lines.

If a tree on your property needs to be removed, we can help coordinate with qualified tree-trimming professionals. Our crews can work with the tree contractor to determine the safest way to remove the tree while protecting the power system and surrounding property.

Tree removal has become an increasing concern because of the emerald ash borer and its impact on the local ash tree population. Dead or weakened trees can become hazardous, especially when located near power lines. Please contact us before arranging work on any tree near utility lines.

Preventing Fire

Be proactive in preventing electrical fire

Take steps to help prevent electrical fires by identifying possible issues before they occur.

When assessing your home, the first step is to hire a qualified electrician to check all wiring to ensure it is up to code and that the electrical system can handle the demands of your electronics, appliances, lights and other electrical needs. Beyond that, watch for possible issues as they arise.

Symptoms of issues include flickering lights, discolored outlets and switch plates, damaged cords, frequently tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses.

Check these electrically related items in your home:

1. **Electrical outlets:** Check for loose-fitting plugs and loose wall receptacles. Replace missing or broken wall plates. If you have young children, install tamper-resistant outlets if your home does not have them. Avoid overloading outlets with adapters and too many appliance plugs.
2. **Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs):** Make sure GFCIs are installed in your kitchen, bathrooms, laundry room, workshop, basement, garage and outdoor outlets. GFCIs help protect against electrical shock. Use the Test and Reset buttons monthly to ensure that they are working properly.
3. **Cords:** Check cords to ensure they are not frayed or cracked, placed under rugs, tightly wrapped around an object or located in high traffic areas. Do not nail or staple them to walls, floors or other objects.
4. **Extension cords:** These are not intended to be permanent solutions, so use them temporarily. If you find that you need more electrical outlets, consult your electrician.
5. **Light bulbs:** Verify that your light bulbs are the intended wattage for the lamp or fixture they are in.
6. **Appliances/electronics:** If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker or gives you an electrical shock, it is time to discard it and replace it with a new version. Use surge protectors to protect expensive electronics. Make sure your appliances and electronics are placed in dry locations.
7. **Circuit breakers/fuses:** Check that circuit breakers are working properly. Fuses should be properly rated for the circuits they protect.
8. **Electrical wiring:** If an outlet is not working, it may be an indicator of unsafe wiring. Also, check for loose wires and lighting fixtures. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind walls. If light switches are hot to the touch or lights spark and flicker, immediately shut them off at the circuit breaker and contact a qualified electrician to make repairs.
9. **Arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs):** AFCIs, which monitor the flow of electricity throughout your home, should be properly installed. If an AFCI detects any abnormality, it shuts the system off to prevent a fire. Upon inspection, an electrician can assess whether your home is properly protected.
10. **Service capacity:** If fuses blow or trip frequently, you may need to increase the capacity of your electrical service or add new branch circuits. Contact a qualified electrician.





Community Solar Site Damage Update

We want to provide an update regarding a hailstorm that happened back in April and the damage it caused to the Community Solar Site.

Following a thorough assessment, we determined that the solar panels sustained extensive damage and are no longer in serviceable condition. Unfortunately, due to the severity of the damage and the costs associated with replacing the panels, we have made the difficult decision not to rebuild or replace this solar site.

We understand that this Solar array field has been useful to some of our members, and we recognize that its loss may be disappointing or inconvenient.

FARMFEST 2026

Electric Co-op Booth Drawings

Thanks for stopping by the Electric Cooperative Booth at Farmfest.

The winners from the drawings are:

String Trimmer – Scott Helget, Brown County REA

Blower – Jada Olson, Lyon-Lincoln

Wet/Dry-Vac – Dennis Tauer, REC

Pressure Washer – Brian Davis, McLeod

Chain Saw – Belle Harder, SCEC



South Central Electric Association

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

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The Board meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at South Central Electric's building at 71176 Tiell Dr., St. James, MN.

Please see our website for a summary of the board meetings.