



**CAPITAL ELECTRIC**  
COOPERATIVE

# CAPITAL ELECTRIC COMMENTS

SEPTEMBER 2015

Capital Electric Cooperative • Bismarck, N.D.  
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*Climbing and working in the air has changed for linemen, with the implementation of a fall-restraint system that was mandated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. In this month's local pages, learn why linemen like **Seth Lothspeich** are practicing an old skill with a new tool — and why change is hard, but good.*

## The evolution of safety



### SEPTEMBER 2015 IN THIS ISSUE

- Change is hard, but good
- Capital Electric participates in hotline school
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- Meeting minutes ... and more

PHOTO BY CARMEN DENNEY



When students sign up for the Bismarck State College lineworker program, one of the first things they learn how to do is climb. It can take weeks for students to get over their fear of heights and learn to climb a wooden pole. Some never do. **Jason Smith**, safety instructor for the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives, estimates about one-third of students registered for the program drop out over their inability to climb.



PHOTO BY CLARICE L. KESLER

# CHANGE IS HARD, BUT GOOD

## Linemen adapt to fall-restraint system

BY CARMEN DEVNEY



Prior to June 2014, OSHA didn't require linemen to wear a safety belt while climbing; they only had to wear one while working in the air. Here, former Capital Electric Lineman **John Fasching** free-climbed a pole to perform a pole-top rescue safety training.

A quick search on the Internet for linemen and climbing turns up story after story about accidents, injuries, and even loss of life. Working on energized, high-voltage power lines and climbing 35-foot distribution poles can be dangerous and deadly for linemen who do not follow the safety guidelines set forth by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, the occupation of lineman is among the most dangerous.

Capital Electric Cooperative employs 13 linemen who take safety very seriously. They attend 10 mandatory safety trainings every year, provided by the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC). Some of the training topics include pole-top

and bucket-truck rescue, defensive driving, OSHA updates, substation safety, chainsaw safety and tree felling, hazard recognition (slips, trips and falls), field observations for site-specific training, and CPR and AED training. Linemen can also attend hotline school, in which they review and practice procedures that involve working on and around energized, high-voltage power lines. The annual school is hosted by NDAREC.

Climbing accidents are not common — but they do happen. A lineman used to climb using only “gaffs” or hooks that are attached to each foot. If one of the spikes hit a crack or knot in the pole, the lineman could lose his balance and “cut out.” A positioning belt might have prevented him from falling far, if it was adjusted correctly and fastened securely to the pole. Without a belt, injury was a certainty. In the past, linemen weren't required to use a belt for climbing — only for working at the top of the pole. They would free-climb using only their legs, hooks and hands. Once they reached the position they needed to string a new line or fix an outage, they would secure a single strap around the pole that was attached to their tool belt. This transferred the weight of the lineman from the outside of the pole to the inside, and allowed the lineman to work hands-free.

There was an art to using the strap. Jason Smith, safety instructor with NDAREC, said it was specifically made to be worn a certain way. If used incorrectly, a lineman could “burn the pole” and fall to the ground. This would likely result in the lineman getting splinters if he grabbed the pole and tried to stop himself from falling.

“Just about everyone who has climbed at some point or another has

*“It used to be that when a lineman went to line school, he learned that if he started falling, he was supposed to push away from the pole so he didn't hit anything on the way down. But you get 30 feet up on a pole, the first thing you're going to do is grab the pole and give it a bear hug. It's human instinct. There's no way to fight it.”*

— Jason Smith,  
NDAREC safety instructor

burned a pole,” Smith reveals. “It used to be that when a lineman went to line school, he learned that if he started falling, he was supposed to push away from the pole so he didn't hit anything on the way down. But you get 30 feet up on a pole, the first thing you're going to do is grab the pole and give it a bear hug. It's human instinct. There's no way to fight it.”

OSHA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Labor, promotes the safety of all employees with its mission: To assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach, education and assistance. OSHA has the task of monitoring and recording falls, which are the most common cause of serious work-related injuries and deaths.

In June 2014, OSHA changed its requirements to make climbing poles and steel towers safer for linemen, who are now required to wear a fall-restraint device that has an inner strap and outer strap. Any time they climb or work 4 feet or higher above ground, they are required to wear the



restraint that would choke the pole in the event of a misstep. The equipment is designed to prevent a lineman from falling more than 2 feet.

Climbing with the new system feels a bit more arduous than free-climbing for Journeyman Lineman Seth Lothspeich, who has been with Capital Electric for 15 years. However, once he reaches the top of the pole and settles back to work, he agrees that he feels more comfortable — and ultimately safer.

“It’s more worker-friendly,” he says.

Steve Harrington, a journeyman lineman who worked for Cass County Electric Cooperative in Fargo and Kindred for 7 years before being hired by Capital Electric 30 years ago, says it’s been a tougher transition for him.

Smith says line schools including Bismarck State College are teaching climbing with the new fall-restraint system, and that apprentice linemen seem to have an advantage because it’s the only way they have learned how to climb. For seasoned linemen like Harrington, climbing and positioning a belt around electrical infrastructure may feel awkward.

“It’s different. It seems harder. That will change over time with practice,” Smith says.

While linemen don’t have to climb poles often, thanks to bucket trucks with booms that lift a lineman to work in the air, there are times when a lineman must climb a pole. Rain and snow can make the ground too wet or muddy for a truck. Poles are also set among creeks, or hills and trees, and the terrain prevents the use of a bucket truck.

“By climbing rather than using a bucket truck, it doesn’t tear up a crop or somebody’s yard. It’s a courtesy for everyone,” Smith says.

Linemen may also choose to climb rather than use a bucket truck, to maintain their skills in the event of an outage or emergency.

The days of free-climbing are over. As safety and standards evolve,

so must the linemen who build and maintain your cooperative’s electrical system.

“This change has been hard but necessary, to protect our linemen while on the job,” concludes Rick Dressler, operations supervisor at Capital Electric. “Climbing with the new system, and adjusting belts as they go, might take our linemen a little more time and getting used to. But, accidents can happen anywhere. Thankfully a climbing accident hasn’t happened here. Since we started using the fall-arrest system, we can know without a doubt that our linemen will stay safe and return home to their families at night. That alone is worth the change.” **CE**



PHOTOS BY CARMEN DENNEY

Linemen wear personal protective gear to prevent accidents and injuries. A hard hat, safety glasses, rubber sleeves and gloves, harness, and rubber protectors keep Journeyman Lineman **Steve Harrington** safe on the job. It also allows him to work on energized lines without interrupting electric service to the cooperative’s member-owners.



Years ago, linemen might have chosen to free-climb rather than use a positioning belt or “scare” strap. Now, OSHA requires linemen to use a fall-arrest device when climbing and working in the air, as demonstrated by Journeyman Lineman **Seth Lothspeich**.

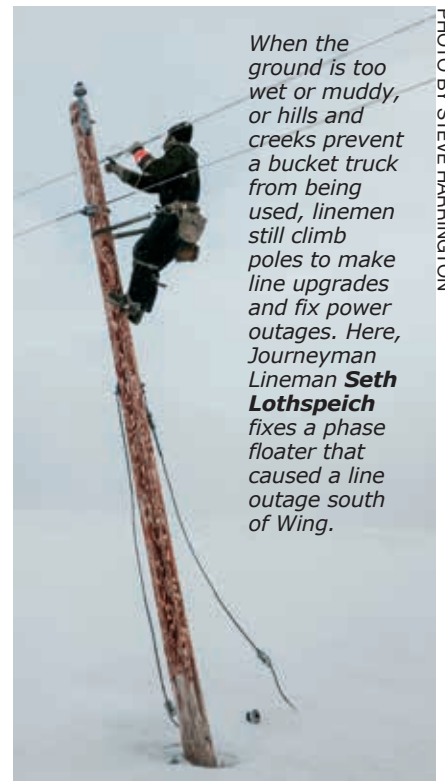


PHOTO BY STEVE HARRINGTON

When the ground is too wet or muddy, or hills and creeks prevent a bucket truck from being used, linemen still climb poles to make line upgrades and fix power outages. Here, Journeyman Lineman **Seth Lothspeich** fixes a phase floater that caused a line outage south of Wing.



Capital Electric Linemen **Matt Hagen** and **Braden Martin** prepared an underground terminating station for hotline school at the BSC lineworker training facility in Mandan. The annual training, hosted by the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives, teaches linemen how to work safely around energized lines.

## Capital Electric linemen participate in hotline school

STORY AND PHOTO BY CARMEN DEVNEY

The wind — and spirits — remained high during hotline school: An annual training hosted by the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC), to teach linemen safe work practices when working around energized overhead and underground power lines.

Linemen from 11 of the state's 16 distribution cooperatives attended the two-session training, held July 27 to 31 at the Bismarck State College lineworker program facility in Mandan. Most of the participants and instructors are employees with North Dakota's rural electric cooperatives. Contractors and vendors also participated.

The objectives for hotline school are to network best practices

amongst North Dakota lineworkers from apprentices to skilled leaders in the field; to learn practical skills and safe work procedures with hands-on instruction and demonstrations from experienced lineworkers; and to apply skills learned throughout six work stations under the guidance of skilled mentors. Education starts in the classroom and ends in the field with hands-on training and practice.

New to this year's training was an underground terminating station. Participants learned EPZ (equal-potential zone) grounding, or how to maintain a safe work zone when working to repair underground faults.

Wind played a major role in this year's hotline school. Sustained winds of more than 30 miles per

hour forced training to temporarily be suspended for the safety of the linemen who were climbing poles and using aerial equipment. During the second session, many linemen were dispatched by their respective cooperatives to fix outages caused by the wind overnight, and they still attended training the next day.

"That's how dedicated our member-cooperatives' linemen truly are. They worked long hours troubleshooting and restoring power, and they still came to class the next day. That shows how much they value learning new techniques and networking with their peers," says Christina Roemmich, director of safety services for NDAREC. **CEC**



# Meet some new folks who serve you at Capital Electric

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CARMEN DEVNEY



**Kacey Galster**

## Kacey Galster

Hired in February as a customer care specialist, Kacey Galster works in the billing department alongside Dana Solem at the front desk, taking phone calls and helping members who stop by the office for assistance.

A Bismarck native, Galster graduated from Century High School and Rasmussen College, earning a degree in business management with a focus on human resources. Prior to being hired by Capital Electric Cooperative, Galster worked for Midcontinent Communications and Verizon Wireless, and has always enjoyed working jobs that require excellent customer service and communications skills. She says she applied to work at Capital Electric because of the opportunities that cooperatives provide, the small-business atmosphere, and its local presence and impact in the community.

Galster has two daughters: Alexis, 12, and Brooklyn, 7, who keep her very busy. In her free time, Galster plays on a women's volleyball league. She also enjoys time with family and friends, playing the piano and violin, and is a huge fan of soccer and hockey.

## Rachel Hulm

Hired in June as a student intern, Rachel Hulm scans documents to the National Information Solutions Cooperative vault system, sorts the mail, changes the backup tapes in the servers and helps the billing department when needed. She worked at Capital Electric Cooperative full-time this summer, but has dropped back to part-time this fall to attend Bismarck State College. She is currently taking general requirement courses, and thinking about pursuing a degree in power plant technology.

A Bismarck native, Hulm grew up in the Capital Electric service area where she spent a lot of time working with her horses and participating in youth rodeos. She is a graduate of Century High School.

She says she appreciates how the co-op offers her a flexible work schedule, so she can study for tests.

In her free time, Hulm enjoys spending time with friends and family.



**Rachel Hulm**

## Make your life easier with electronic options from SmartHub

Capital Electric members: Are you using SmartHub to check your home's electric usage on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, and compare usage from month to month? This is a great way to help monitor your energy use and ultimately lower your utility bill.

SmartHub is an application that allows you to access electric accounts on mobile devices. It provides a "My Account" Web portal that gives you full access to your account information. You can pay or view your bill, review account history and usage, set up and store payment information, set up auto pay or paperless billing, and change your address or phone number. You can even select how to receive notifications, and choose the account in which you want the notification to apply.

Some common notifications include:

- Your bill is available;
- Your credit card is expired.
- Past-due notifications; and
- Payment confirmation.

SmartHub is also a great way for Capital Electric to connect with our member-owners. If customizing your account, having more control, and ultimately having the ability to reduce your monthly utility bill sounds like something you are interested in doing, give it a try!

### MOBILE ACCOUNT ACCESS

This safe and secure app is available for iOS (iPhone, iPad) and Android users, and it takes less than three minutes to set up. Just search for the app in the Apple store or in the Google Play store on your mobile device.

### NO MOBILE DEVICE? NO PROBLEM.

You don't need a smart phone to manage your account online. When you visit [www.capitalelec.com](http://www.capitalelec.com), you are provided with a

link to your "My Account/Smarthub" section. Every member has an account, so if you haven't signed up to access it yet, please do so from the "New User" hyperlink located on the SmartHub login screen.

### ADDITIONAL ELECTRONIC PAYMENT OPTIONS

In addition to the traditional payment methods of cash and check, Capital Electric provides multiple electronic payment methods. SmartHub mobile and Web access provide for payment by bank account and credit and debit cards with the click of a button. Payment methods can be stored and managed on our secure server to make payments simple and fast. Take it one step further by signing up for recurring payments that automatically pay your bill on the due date. For members who prefer to pay by telephone, our automated phone system is available 24/7 and can be reached by calling 1-877-853-5928. **CEC**

# CAPITAL CREDIT CLAIMS

Listed below are the names of former Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc. members who had capital credit checks mailed to them in June of the year 2009. These checks have been returned to Capital Electric Cooperative by the postal service because they could not locate the members at the address on file. A further search by Capital Electric personnel has not turned up their whereabouts.

If you received electrical service from Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc. any time during the year 1993 and your name is on this list, please contact our office. If you know of the whereabouts of members on this list who received electrical service from Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc. any time during the year 1993, please have them contact our office at 701-223-1513.

Please keep in mind that not all of the capital credit amounts are large. However, we desire to get the money due to those who earned it, and clear up our records.

We will redeem capital credits for those members on the following list who notify us prior to Dec. 1, 2015. Notice is hereby given that any of the aforementioned unclaimed capital credits outstanding after Dec. 1, 2015 will be forfeited pursuant to Section 10-15-34.1 and 10-15-23 of the North Dakota Century Code.

## 3RD NOTICE – SEPTEMBER 2015

ADVANCED ELECTRIC INC.	FOTH, BRUCE	MABIN, PAT M.	RICKE, ARTHUR G.
ALBIN, TERRY R.	FOTH, SHARON	MALLUM, PATRICIA L.	RICKE, SHIRLEY M.
ANDERSON, NEIL	FREADHOFF, KIRK	MALONEY, LOIS	ROBINSON, MARK D.
BAILEY CONSTRUCTION	FRENCH, CRAIG ALAN	MALONEY, TROY	ROEHRICH, TRACY
INC.	GAROWSKI, PETER	MANN, VIDA	ROHRICH, BOB
BAILEY, DON	GARTNER, DAVE	MARTIN, GEORGE A.	ROHWELLER, JANESSA
BAILEY, JENNIFER	GARTNER, HELEN	MASON, MICHAEL R.	RUSSELL, ROGER
BAUER, NATE	GEINERT, LYNEA	MAY, KRIS	SAHR, DAWN
BEARSHEART, WYATT	GEVEDON, CHARLOTTE A.	MBM INC - MCDONALDS	SAHR, JEFFREY J.
BLAIR, JULIE	GOULET, TODD D.	MCBEAIN, DANIEL P.	SCHLOSSER, CHERYL
BLOOM, JOYCE M.	GOULET, TRICIA M.	MCBEAIN, JANELL E.	SCHMITT, DAWN
BOOTH, JUDSON M.	GRECO, MICHAEL A.	MCCLOUD, TIM	SCHNEIDER, DEBRA
BORCHERT, AUGUST	GREER, LORI L.	MCKAY, DALINDA	SCHNEIDER, RICHARD
BREHM, MICHAEL	GROSZ, JULIE M.	MEEK, LARRY	SKROK, ARLENE F.
BRIGHT, EDWARD S.	GROVE, ERIC N.	MEREDITH NEW HERITAGE	SKROK, KENNETH F.
BROCKMAN, KRISTI L.	HAASE, JEAN	MERTZ, JENNIFER JO	SMITH, CARLA J.
BRUGGER, BARBARA M.	HARTMAN, CHARLES J.	MERTZ, ROBERT	SMITH, VINCENT J.
BUCK, JOHNNY W.	HARTMAN, LORI ANN	MOHS, KIRBY	STEEN, JAY E.
BUCK, VICKI L.	HAYDEN, GARY	MOLDENHAUER, HOLLI	STRAND, ALLEN D.
CAMPBELL, JANIS A.	HORNING, ANNETTE	MORROW, JENAE	SWENSON, MONTE L.
CAMPBELL, MICHAEL L.	IBRAHIM, A. H.	MORROW, PAUL	THOM, FRAN
CARSON, DOREEN	JENSEN, STEVE	MOSBRUCKER, HELEN	THOM, NEIL E.
CARSON, GREG	JOHNSON, TAMMIE	MULLINS, CAROL	THORBERG, ROBERT V.
CHRISTENSEN, JEAN	JOYCE, KAREN	NELSON, CARRIE	TRUSTY, NICOLE
CLOOTEN, JOAN E.	JPB INC.	NELSON, MICHAEL	TWINN, LENA
CONITZ, DENISE D.	KAISER, TIM	NILES, RANDY	TWO BEARS, WILLIAMETTE
CREATIVE PRODUCTS	KELLERMAN, KAREN L.	NORDGAARD, BRAD	VETSCH, RANDY
DANIEL, PATRICIA L.	KIESZ, PAMELA M.	NORDGAARD, KARLA	VOLK, MARY C.
DEAN, JAMES A.	KOLAND, KEITH	ODAY, I PATRICK.	WALCH, BETTY
DESORMEAUX, JOEY A.	KOST, SHANE M.	ODAY, TAMMY DAHL.	WILCOX, JACQUELINE K.
DESORMEAUX, MICHELLE R.	KREEGER, RANDI	OLSON, LEROY	WILCOX, WILLIAM C.
DIEDE, KENT	KREEGER, ROBERT	OLSON, ROGER	WILDROSE PROPERTIES
DOCKTER, SHANE B.	KUPFER, HARDIS	PATNEAUD, JONI M.	WILLIAMS, BETTY
DUCHENEVAUX, CLAUDINE	KURIHARA, CATHERINE M.	PEKARSKI, DALE	WINCKLER, REUBEN
EADES, JIMMY D.	LAGRO, BRENDA	PHILLIPS, JULIE A.	WINKOWITSCH, TAMMY
ERICKSON, CARLE	LAGRO, STEVE	PHILLIPS, MURRAY E.	WOEHL, KATHERINE A.
ERICKSON, ELSIE	LANG, TOM	PIETZ, DAWN	WOEHL, TRACY C.
FAITH INDEPENDENT	LEE, JANET E.	PIETZ, RICHARD	WOLF, DARREL G.
BAPTIST CHURCH	LERVOLD, VIOLET J.	POLIVODA, NADEZHDA	WOLFE, SHAWN
FEIST, LISA J.	LINK, CHRISTOPHER B.	POLIVODA, VASILIIY	WOLFF, HAROLD M.
FEIST, TERRY A.	LINK, DAWN	RHONE, KATHY	
FONTENOT, JOHNNIE W.	M & J TRUCKING	RICHTER, GLYNIS R.	

## Board minute excerpts July 28, 2015

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc., was held Tuesday, July 28, 2015, at 9 a.m. at co-op headquarters in Bismarck.

**Financial review:** Prior to the board meeting, Directors Olson and Vilhauer reviewed the June 2015 check register and expenditures. They reported all checks were in order. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve June expenditures in the amount of \$3,096,493.25.

**Business department report:** The Business Manager reviewed the June financial and statistical report with the Board. The total kilowatt-hour (KWH) sales for June 2015 was over budget by 8.9 percent. The actual monthly electric revenue is above budget by 5.5 percent. Year-to-date, KWH sales are below budget by 3.1 percent and electric revenue is under budget by 4.2 percent.

The financial margin for June is -\$231,325 versus the budgeted margin of -\$63,565, below budget by \$167,760. Capital Electric's load factor was below budget, resulting in a cost increase of \$104,000. The year-to-date margin is \$498,517 versus \$748,575 budgeted, under budget by \$250,058.

Capital Electric began billing 59 new services in June, bringing our active services to 18,752 versus 17,931 at this time last year, or a net increase of 821 accounts over the last 12 months.

**Refi-RUS direct notes:** The refinance of Rural Utilities Service (RUS) direct notes via CoBank was completed on July 22, 2015. Final maturity is in the year 2030. Interest savings over the term of the note will be \$269,000. Additional savings are expected based on CoBank capital credit retirements.

**Health care trust:** The North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives' (NDAREC) board voted on July 2 to sponsor the creation of the trust. The next meeting for delegates is Aug. 11 and will involve presentations by the prospective carriers.

**Cyber security assessment:** We continue to work on the internal physical security assessment. We are in the process of meeting internally with employees and with potential vendors to evaluate options and estimated costs.

**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:

Louise & Edwin Vietz	\$ 301.20
Duane Frank	\$ 8,727.87
Dahlen Jensen	\$ 124.43
Anton Gross	\$ 804.62

Lavonne Young	\$ 442.36
Herbert Place	\$ 1,075.97
David A. Bitz	\$ 21.28
Ruth Mehlhoff	\$ 15.24
Loretta Brady	\$ 475.02
Arlene Nelson	\$ 843.29
Vera Triebasser	\$ 263.58
TOTAL	\$ 13,094.87

**CEC – KRTA:** The Manager reviewed the 2014 Key Ratio Trend Analysis (KRTA) executive summary, highlighting trends that the cooperative was either high or low in comparison to our peers nationally, statewide or within our power supply group.

**Engineering and operations report:** The Manager reviewed the written report from the engineering and operations department. We completed 64 work orders this month, adding 60 new consumers to the system.

Fischer, 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation and Gieser Utility Contracting continue to trench in new services, and VIP continues to work on our overhead rural rebuild.

The contractor started construction of our control building at the Horizon Substation. The cement contractor poured both pads for the control buildings at Moffit and Christiana Substations. Central Power's contractor continues to work on the Horizon II Substation, plus Central Power's crews are busy getting ready for the conversion on their GVP and Circle K Substations.

Rich and Les have been wiring new controls for the OCRs in the Lincoln Substation.

Fisher Contracting has been working on installing 214B (1.5 miles of three-phase 500 mcm from North Bismarck Substation to Centennial Road).

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

**Wing Service Center building:** The Wing Service Center building project is approaching completion.

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

**Mid-West Board meeting:** The Mid-West Board meeting will be held Dec. 7 to 10, 2015, in Denver, Colo. Delegates to the meeting will be Nygren, Wrangham and Haugen-Hoffart, with Vilhauer as the alternate.

**Public Service Commission Case No. PU-13-871:** The adverse decision will be appealed to the North Dakota Supreme Court.

**Central Power Electric Cooperative:** Hilken reported on Central Power matters. Discussions are ongoing between Central Power and Capital Electric on the transmission line reconductor projects identified in our 2013-2016 Construction Work Plan as projects 1017, 1021 and 1022.

**Basin Electric Power Cooperative:** The Manager reported on Basin Electric matters. Basin Electric is offering a discount to members for all-power contract extensions. The "discount" is created by extending the generation depreciation term on plant. While the rate impact is still in question, it looks like there may be no rate increase to Central Power in 2016.

The BN settlement is now complete.

Wrangham was appointed delegate to the Basin Electric annual meeting with Olson appointed as the alternate.

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

**NDAREC:** The meeting was held July 2 and 3, 2015, in Medora.

**BisMan Community Food Co-op:** We received a request from the Bis-Man Community Food Co-op for an investment or donation to their start-up campaign. Patrie reported on the business proposal, and then recused himself from discussion as his organization provides technical assistance to the cooperative. No action was taken at this time and the matter was deferred to the August meeting.

Haugen-Hoffart reported on the CoBank seminar she attended. She reported it was an excellent meeting with excellent speakers.

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

### CAPITAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE 4111 State St. N. Bismarck, ND 58503

Website: [www.capitalelec.com](http://www.capitalelec.com)

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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William Patrie ..... Bismarck  
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