

# Verendrye Network News

Verendrye Electric Cooperative • Velva, N.D.

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Web site: [www.verendrye.com](http://www.verendrye.com)

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

JANUARY 2012

## Member Advisory Committee helps Verendrye Electric



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**JANUARY 2012**

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- International Year of Cooperatives
- Youth Tour seeks applicants



Verendrye Board Member Blaine Bruner speaks to Verendrye's Member Advisory Committee at the Sleep Inn in Minot at the committee's November meeting.

## Growth, technology highlight Member Advisory meeting

**G**rowth has been the theme of Verendrye Electric Cooperative and has no sign of slowing. The cooperative is working hard to keep up with the growth and is planning for the region's future with new infrastructure and technology.

Verendrye continues to add hundreds of accounts each of the past few years and 2012 will be another good year as Minot and the surrounding area continues to boom.

"When you look at Minot, there's a variety of growth including homes, hotels, apartments and FEMA trailers," Assistant Manager Randy Hauck said. Verendrye directors and staff updated the cooperative's Member Advisory Committee on the status of the co-op at the November Member Advisory Committee meeting that was attended by 80 people.

Hauck also updated the committee on the Minot Air Force Base, Verendrye's number one account. Verendrye was awarded a 50-year contract to take over the electrical distribution facilities on the base and will officially take over in June. Verendrye had provided bulk power delivery since the base was built in the 1950s, but the co-op did not own and maintain most of the infrastructure.

### Technology

Engineering and Operations Manager John Westby said Verendrye is currently working on a system to make hourly usage data available to members that can be accessed by logging onto their accounts through the Internet. There is no definite timeline on when the system will be fully available, but look for developments within the year.

"Our hope is that this information will help you operate your homes and businesses more efficiently," Westby said. Westby also talked about interactive mapping that allows Verendrye to decrease the time it takes to repair outages. When the first call comes into Verendrye about an outage, a signal is sent through the wires to meters in the area to determine which meters are receiving power and which are

not. The computer then pinpoints where it thinks the problem is occurring based on the meter information.

"Our distribution system is a very, very complex network," Westby said.

Westby said members will also see another distribution point for electricity in southwest Minot being built by Central Power Electric Cooperative that is scheduled for construction this year. The new source will help handle new growth and improve reliability of the system.

### Rates and regulations

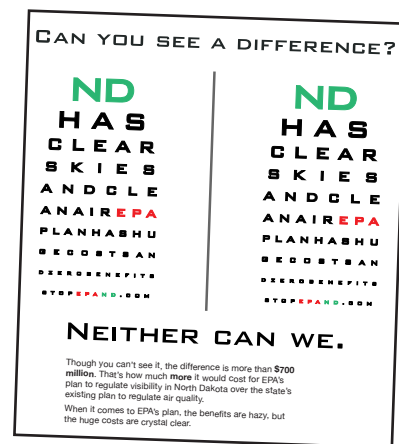
Although rates have remained stable for more than a year, there will likely be a rate increase needed in October because of a half-cent per kilowatt-hour increase in wholesale costs implemented by Basin Electric recently.

"That's something we just can't absorb," said General Manager Bruce Carlson.

Carlson also spoke about potential Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations, including regional haze, in which the EPA wants to take over the N.D. Health Department's plan. The EPA's plan would cost cooperatives an additional \$700 million and would result in no visible benefit.

"We think the plan laid out by the North Dakota Health Department is more than adequate to maintain our pristine air," Carlson said.

For more information on the regional haze issue, go to [www.stopepand.com](http://www.stopepand.com).



# Member Advisory Committee helps Verendrye

*Editor's note: This is the fourth article in a six-month series explaining cooperative leadership and the advantages of being part of a democratically controlled, member-owned cooperative. Next month's issue will explain how you can nominate someone to run for a position on the board of directors at area caucus meetings in April.*

## Member Advisory Committee helps Verendrye

Leadership at Verendrye Electric Cooperative (VEC) begins with members who are encouraged to learn about their cooperative, help make decisions and consider becoming candidates for the board of directors.

Whether you want to begin a path to becoming a Verendrye board member, or you just want to learn and enjoy the fellowship of other VEC members, the Member Advisory Committee is the perfect place to start. To become a member of the committee, contact one of your local directors, or contact Verendrye and we will be glad to connect you with a director.

There are currently about 60 people appointed to the Member Advisory Committee spread throughout Verendrye's three director districts. About a third of those members are new each year. New members are appointed by directors.

## Committee duties

It's not hard to serve on the Member Advisory Committee and it does not take a large time commitment. There are only two meetings each year – one in November and at Verendrye's annual meeting in June. The November meeting includes a dinner and presentations about what's new at Verendrye. This meeting also gives committee members a time to ask questions and provide Verendrye directors, staff and employees with suggestions on ways to improve the cooperative.

Verendrye Director Blaine Bruner, a past member of the committee, said getting people together to discuss what's happening at the cooperative is important. "It's definitely a good step toward being involved and having a voice in your local cooperative," Bruner said. Several board members, past and present, have served on the Member Advisory Committee.

General Manager Bruce Carlson said hearing from members helps Verendrye employees know when there are issues that need to be addressed.

"You are the eyes and ears of the cooperative," General Manager Bruce Carlson told the committee in November. "If there is a problem out there, we need to know about it so we can fix it."

The meeting is typically held in Minot, but mileage is paid and members will receive a small stipend for their time. During the November meeting,



*Jim Rostad, who serves on the Member Advisory Committee, thanked Verendrye employees for their work during the flood. An important part of the committee's November meeting is to hear from members about how they think the cooperative is being operated.*

committee members also vote on who they want to serve on the Verendrye Electric Trust Board. The VE Trust Board is comprised of five members who make decisions on Operation Round Up grants. For more about Operation Round Up, see the article on the next page.

Member Advisory Committee members also attend Verendrye's annual meeting in June. Verendrye encourages the members to volunteer to help at the annual meeting.

Examples of duties include greeting members as they arrive, helping register members, helping with kids activities and helping with elections of board members.

For more information about becoming a member of the committee, call (800) 472-2141.

## About the Member Advisory Committee

- Has about 60 VEC members.
- Purpose is to learn about the co-op and provide input to directors and employees.
- Meets twice a year.
- Members are appointed by directors.
- Contact Verendrye at (800) 472-2141 if you are interested in serving.

## Operation Round Up board member elected

The Member Advisory Committee

elected Kelly Finke, of Berthold, to serve a three-year term on the Verendrye Electric Trust Board. Finke replaces Kevin Reinwoski, who served two terms.

The VE Trust board oversees Verendrye's Operation Round Up program in which members voluntarily round up their monthly bills to the nearest dollar amount. The money raised is donated to various causes, including schools, senior centers, community projects, charitable organizations and medical assistance for individuals.

Verendrye thanks Kevin for his six years of service to Operation Round Up and congratulates Kelly for winning a seat on the board!



The Operation Round Up board consists of five members who are elected by the Member Advisory Committee. From left are Gerard Deibert, Nikki Espeseth, Jodi Johnson, Lisa Krueger and Kelly Finke.



Several bulls will be on display on Main Street in Drake for the Breeders' Classic Feb. 1. The event also features a free chili feed, door prizes and informational presentations.

displays and door prizes. Home Economist Callie Johnson will also be on hand to make a presentation for women.

Blaine Bruner, a Verendrye Electric Cooperative board member who helps organize the event, said he expects 20 to 25 cattle pens with breeders from across the state. Ranchers can purchase cattle at the event, and as an incentive to buy, there will be several \$100 gift certificates given away that people can use to purchase cattle.

Sponsors will have booths set up in city hall and will also be giving away door prizes.

"It's the biggest day of the year in Drake," Bruner said. "Our regular sponsors have been very good at helping us out again this year and that has made it easy for us."

If you would like to sponsor the event, or show cattle, contact Bruner at (701) 721-4754.

## Drake Breeders' Classic on tap for Feb. 1

Drake area residents are making plans for the Annual Breeders' Classic, one of the region's premiere cattle events that also features a free hot chili feed, prizes and much more.

The event begins Feb. 1 with a variety of bulls being displayed on Main Street by 10 a.m. and events throughout the day. A community chili feed takes place in the Knights of Columbus from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and a program begins at 1 p.m. in city hall. The program includes an informational session by area veterinarian Dr. Gerald Kitto, vendor



*Happy  
New Year!*

From the board  
and employees  
of  
Verendrye Electric  
Cooperative

# A chance to win \$100 each month with e-bill

Last year's contest will be extended each month in 2012

Verendrye Electric is giving its members one chance each month to win a \$100 bill credit in 2012. It is easy to enter the contest. All you have to do is go to [www.verendrye.com](http://www.verendrye.com) and check your bill online. If you are already registered with Verendrye, all you have to do is view your bill at least once each month to be entered into the drawing. You will only be entered into the drawing once each month no matter how many times you view your bill.

If you are not already registered online, you will need your account number and a valid e-mail address handy to get registered. Once you have the information ready, click on the red "my-e-bill" tab toward the top of the home page. After clicking on "my e-bill," there is a link for new users to register for online account access.

Verendrye encourages all of its members to view their bills online because of several reasons:

- You can see and pay your bill a few days before it comes in the mail.
- You can view previous payments and bills.
- You can see charts comparing your total usage for several months and charts that show daily and monthly usage and cost data.
- You can update your account information quickly and easily.




The information online is available via a secure server, and Verendrye does not release any of your information to third parties. You have the option of viewing your bill online and receiving it in the mail, or you can choose to receive it online only and receive a 50 cent credit each month.

Verendrye will publish the names of the winners in upcoming editions of *North Dakota LIVING*.

For more information, contact VEC at (800) 472-2141.

## Last e-bill winner of 2011 announced

Congratulations to Donald and Janet Stringer, of Minot, who won a \$100 bill credit by participating in the e-bill program! The Stringers were the last winners of the contest in 2011.



Welcome to our e-bill site. Please consider one of our electronic payment options. To visit with our customer service representative call 1-800-472-2141 or e-mail [rec@verendrye.com](mailto:rec@verendrye.com).

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative  
The power of human connections

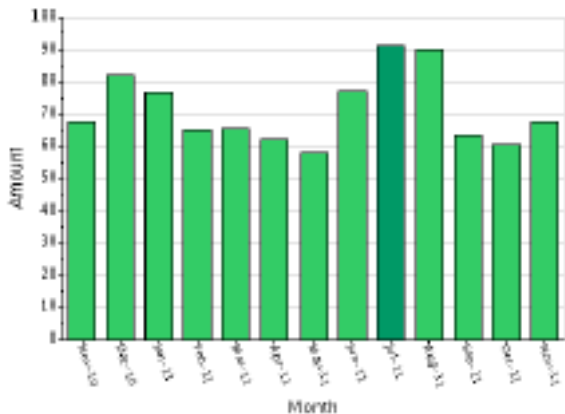
**Contact Us**  
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Change My E-mail  
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Financial Info.  
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**Enter Meter Readings**  
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Account List/Pay Bill

**Details for Account**  
- VEC  
2408 BROOKSIDE DR  
Main Meter  
Payments  
Billings  
View Charts

**Usage and Cost Charts**  
**Account Number: 4402000 - Electric**

**Monthly Cost**



NISC®

This is a sample screen shot of an account viewed on Verendrye's Web site through e-bill. The program is user-friendly and allows members to pay their bill online, change account settings, and see graphs of their monthly cost, daily average cost, monthly usage and daily average usage. Verendrye is currently working on providing hourly usage data through e-bill, although the rollout date for that has not been set. To sign up for e-bill, simply go to Verendrye's Web site, [www.verendrye.com](http://www.verendrye.com) and click on the red "my e-bill" banner toward the top. You will need your account number and an e-mail address. You can also call us at (800) 472-2141 if you need help setting up an account.



**2012**  
International  
Year of  
**Cooperatives**

COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISES BUILD A BETTER WORLD

## Powerful players

According to the Quentin Burdick Center for Cooperatives in Fargo, cooperatives are a vital component of the North Dakota economy. According to a 2010 study of cooperatives:

- 332 businesses operated in North Dakota as cooperatives, with 256 headquartered in the state
- North Dakota cooperatives contributed \$5.6 billion to the state's economy
- Cooperatives employed 8,000 people on a full-time basis and paid \$1.4 billion in wages and benefits
- North Dakota's electric cooperatives contributed \$2.3 billion in gross business volume to the state economy
- North Dakota's telecommunications cooperatives contributed \$396 million in gross business volume to the state economy, employing approximately 1,200 people
- North Dakota farm supply and output marketing co-ops contributed gross business volume of \$2.4 billion to the state economy
- 48 cooperatively owned businesses provided credit services for consumers and other business operations in North Dakota
- North Dakota cooperatives generated approximately \$342 million in state and local tax revenue

COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISES BUILD A BETTER WORLD



## Cooperatives celebrated in 2012

**E**lectric cooperatives and other members of the co-op family take center stage across the world in 2012, which has been designated as the International Year of Cooperatives by the United Nations General Assembly.

The economic and social progress cooperatives bring to their communities will be celebrated in 2012. Cooperatives provide electricity and telecommunications services, offer financial and banking services, and provide housing and agricultural marketing and supplies.

Each year, the United Nations honors one industry, passing Resolution 64/136 to honor cooperatives in 2012, with the theme, "Cooperative Enterprises Build a Better World."

"We're surrounded by a diverse mix of cooperatives," states Glenn English, chief executive officer of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the national service organization for more than 900 nonprofit electric cooperatives. "No matter what kind of co-op you belong to, two things are clear: we put people first, and we are innovators. By getting neighbors and communities to work together, co-op members build a better world."

### FAST FACTS:

- Almost 30 percent of farm products in the United States are marketed through cooperatives
- Electric cooperatives operate more than half of the electric distribution lines in the United States
- Since 1990, value-added cooperatives have built nearly \$500 million in facilities and account for more than 600 new jobs in North Dakota

# WHAT ARE CO-OPS?

## Co-ops light up the world

Cooperatives are independent, local businesses owned by those they serve.

"We share a common set of business principles and values like self-help and democracy," explains Glenn English, chief executive officer of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Modern cooperatives trace their roots to a store started by weavers in Rochdale, England, in 1844. The guiding set of Rochdale Principles later fueled a cooperative explosion after being introduced to the United States by the National Grange in 1874.

"And co-ops continue today to provide a tremendous service to people throughout the world. Cooperatives are a model of self-reliance and an example of people working together to improve their quality of life," English says.

According to the Washington, D.C.-based National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA), more than 29,200 cooperatives nationally employ 2 million Americans. One in every four Americans is a co-op member, but the scope of the cooperative network doesn't stop at the border.

"Co-ops are a major economic force in industrialized countries and provide a powerful business model for developing nations," notes Paul Hazen, NCBA president.

More than 1 billion co-op members exist worldwide, and co-ops generate 100 million jobs globally. Cooperatives strive for sustainable development of communities through member-driven policies, with co-op leaders elected by members.

"As a member, you have a voice in how your co-op operates. That keeps the co-op's focus on you and how best to meet your needs," English notes.



The innovative practices of co-ops provide consumer-focused solutions that can adapt quickly to change. Unlike competitive, profit-driven businesses, co-ops cooperate with each other to fashion programs that improve service.

Electric cooperatives like your local electric cooperative are leading the way nationally in deploying technologies that enhance service reliability.

"You can find co-ops for all walks of life," English says. "When people unite with a common goal, the co-op business model comes into play."

### Cooperatives lead

Electric cooperatives are leaders, with more than 900 electric cooperatives delivering power and light to 42 million consumers in 47 states covering more than 75 percent of the nation's landmass.

Here at home, 332 businesses operate in North Dakota as cooperatives, with 256 headquartered in the state. In 2010, North Dakota cooperatives contributed \$5.6 billion to the state's economy and employed 8,000 people on a full-time basis, according to the Quentin Burdick Center

for Cooperatives in Fargo.

Sixteen distribution electric cooperatives serve 250,000 North Dakotans. They have invested nearly \$1 billion in distribution facilities in the state and employ more than 2,300 people.

As we celebrate the International Year of Cooperatives, North Dakota cooperatives continue to meet the needs of their members, taking the lead in revitalizing North Dakota through economic development and community services - and adding value to the lives of North Dakotans.

# Beware of energy scams

Last fall, some Verendrye members received a postcard inviting them to a free meal at a restaurant to hear a presentation on how to save hundreds or even thousands of dollars on utility bills. The postcard did not have a name of a company listed on it and when you called the 1-800 number, the voicemail message asked you to leave your contact information and whether you had access to your attic to allow installation of their energy-saving device.

Consumers should be leery any time they receive solicitations like this whether they come in the mail, or from a door-to-door salesperson.

"Like the old cliché goes, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is," said Verendrye Energy Advisor Tom Jespersen, who has more than 20 years of experience in home energy. Jespersen said there is not a magic device that is going to drastically reduce your heat bill. He said to even come close to seeing the amount of energy savings some scammers claim, it would require replacing your home heating source to something more efficient.

Some business may be selling a legal product, but will often exaggerate the energy savings. Jespersen said some companies claim one electric space heater will heat a 1,500-square-foot home. "They probably can heat a 1,500-square-foot home if you live in Florida," Jespersen said. The heaters are often made of fancy wood and sell for hundreds of dollars, but are no more effective than much cheaper models found in many retail stores. Worse yet, if you are plugging the heaters into a regular outlet, you would not be getting the cheaper electric heating rate offered to Verendrye members



Verendrye Energy Advisor Tom Jespersen and other cooperative employees can help answer questions about questionable solicitations of energy-savings devices.

who have electric heat hard-wired and sub-metered.

Other energy-savings scams include products that claim to correct power factor in your home and devices that require you to tamper with your meter. Verendrye does not bill residential members for power factor and tampering with your meter is not only against the law, it is dangerous.

The best bet is to call Verendrye if you receive a suspicious solicitation. Verendrye energy experts like Jespersen are happy to help you decide how to make your home more energy-efficient. The cooperative also provides free home energy audits and rebates to purchase efficient equipment such as heat pumps and water heaters.

## Describe a day without electricity and win a trip to Washington, D.C.

There's still time for students to enter Verendrye Electric's Youth Tour contest and to apply for three, \$500 scholarships. The deadline for the Youth Tour contest is Jan. 30 and the deadline for scholarships is Feb. 10.

The winner of the Youth Tour contest wins an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C. Contestants must be a junior or senior in the fall of 2012 and must be served by Verendrye Electric. The contestant must submit an essay to Verendrye no longer than two, double-spaced, typed pages on the topic: "What would your day be like without electricity?" If you have questions about the contest, contact Tom Rafferty at (701) 852-0406.

### Submit scholarship applications by Feb. 10

Verendrye Electric Cooperative (VEC) and Basin Electric Power Cooperative team up each year to award three, \$500 scholarships, one per director district, to area high school or college students. High school seniors or college students have until Feb. 10 to apply for the scholarships. To be eligible for the VEC scholarships, students must be dependents of a VEC member and enter college in the fall of the school year for which the scholarship is awarded. Students must complete an application, which is available at [www.verendrye.com/programs/services/scholarships](http://www.verendrye.com/programs/services/scholarships) or by calling or visiting Verendrye Electric's offices in Velva or Minot.

Applicants are required to include a recent academic transcript, copy of a college entrance exam (ACT or SAT scores), a one-page essay and an appraisal completed by a teacher, counselor or supervisor. For questions about the scholarships, call (800) 472-2141.

### Thank you!

Thank you for many years of wonderful service. We always really appreciated Verendrye. Good job! Thanks again!



Larry and Edith Cvancara,  
Rapid City, S.D.

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