SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

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SECO year-end update

2025 saw growth and infrastructure upgrades

By **TYE WILLIAMS** | *Manager*

IT is getting close to the end of 2025, and we have been working hard all year to keep the lights on and continue improving reliability throughout our territory. We invested approximately $2 million into the utility plant throughout 2025. Most of the investments were for replacing old poles, but we have also been upgrading electronic equipment throughout the plant. We plan to have our contractors resume their pole replacements in the spring of 2026, and we have budgeted another $2.5 million over the next two years for pole changes.

Southeast Electric Coopeartive has seen substantial growth in energy sales driven by our large oil- and gas-pipeline loads. We energized our new Mill Iron substation and transmission line in July. This build provides up to 25 megawatts (MW) of capacity for pipeline pumping sites and back-feed opportunities for our other substations. We have also upgraded our Bridger substation to allow for renewed pump-site usage, which should be active again before the end of 2025.

The increased growth has enabled us to continue to reinvest in the utility plant without borrowing funds since 2022, and to spread our fixed costs across more energy sales. However, starting in January 2026, our most significant expense, power purchases, will be increasing by 9.5 percent. Our power providers, Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) and Basin Electric Cooperative, are increasing their rates to improve the reliability of their transmission lines and generation plants, and to build new generation plants. AI and data centers are a hot topic across the U.S., but Basin has created a Large Load Program to

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Christmas lights, a lasting tradition

By **ERIN HOLLINSHEAD** | *Executive Director of Safe Electricity*

LONG before electricity, people brightened the dark winter months with firelight — from the burning of the Yule log to candles placed around the home. The first recorded candlelit Christmas trees appeared in Germany in 1660, and eventually spread across Europe, reaching the United States later in the century.

While the glow of the candles was festive, it also posed a serious fire hazard, so the light could only be enjoyed for a short time.

A revolutionary spark

While Thomas Edison invented the incandescent light bulb in 1879, his colleague, Edward H. Johnson, created the first electric Christmas tree lights in 1882. He hand-wired 80 colored bulbs around a revolving tree in his parlor, all powered by a generator.

Johnson's lights were ahead of their time, as electricity was not yet routinely available, and electric lights were considered expensive. President Grover Cleveland and his wife, First Lady Frances Cleveland, helped boost acceptance in the 1890s, when the White House Christmas tree was illuminated with colored bulbs to delight their young daughters.

The tradition of outdoor light displays, which we now associate with driving around to view beautifully lit homes and elaborate light shows, began in North America. This expansion was made possible by the development of safe outdoor Christmas light bulbs and light strings in the 1920s.

LEDs and other new tech

Christmas lights have come a long way. Today's LED lights shine brighter than ever, creating beautiful displays while using less energy — and they're built to last.

Every holiday season, millions of light sets brighten homes across the country. From twinkling displays set to music to TV favorites such as ABC's *The Great Christmas Light Fight,* modern holiday lighting turns neighborhoods into dazzling shows filled with festive "flip the switch" moments.

Year after year, Christmas lights keep adding sparkle to our homes and our holidays. They bring warmth and joy to the darkest winter nights — a mix of new technology and timeless tradition that makes them truly magical. RM

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

SOUTHEAST Electric Scholarship, MECA Memorial Scholarship, Basin Power Electric Scholarship and the Vern Emery Memorial Lineman Scholarship applications are available at *https://www.seecoop.com/scholarships* or you can stop by the office and pick one up. Due date is January 30 at 5 p.m. Applications can be dropped by the office, mailed or emailed to *info@seecoop.com.*

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isolate the current membership from these risks. This program is similar to our Contribution in Aid of Construction (CIAC) payments, which ensure our large loads pay for all infrastructure upgrades.

Our next large project is to rebuild the transmission line between Ekalaka and Baker. The initial estimate from our engineering firm was $20 million. We have started engineering and working through a more detailed cost analysis of the project. This project is intended to improve the reliability of our service, increase capacity, and provide space along Highway 7 for upcoming road projects. We have already secured funding to rebuild the first half of the project, ensuring we can rebuild the line and allow the Highway 7 project to move forward, unaffected by our poles.

As SECO faces higher expenses and the continued need to reinvest in the utility plant, we will raise rates for all our rate schedules, starting in January. Most of our membership falls under our general single-phase service rate. Over the past few years, we have been reporting the demand reading in kilowatt (kW) at zero cost. Starting in January, we will add a charge for the demand (kW) at $0.50/kW for those on this rate, and raising the base charge by $1 per month. For further information on the upcoming rate changes, please visit our website at *www.seecoop.com* or contact Southeast Electric. RM