



CELEBRATING 80 YEARS



2026 marks the 80th Anniversary of Southeast Electric Cooperative. February 12, 1946, Southeast Electric Cooperative Minutes state that Delmas H. Baird called the meeting to order... And so it began — 80 years of faithful and reliable service.

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Reliability requires investment

By TYE WILLIAMS | Manager

As your local power provider, Southeast Electric's mission has always been simple: keep the lights on and support the communities we serve. But behind every switch, every warm home and every business that opens its doors is a complex system that requires constant care. Reliable electricity doesn't happen by accident. It requires ongoing investment in our local grid — through system repairs, maintenance, upgrades and the integration of new technologies to operate smarter and more efficiently.

Much of the energy system we rely on today was built decades ago. While it continues to serve us well, age alone means that components must be repaired or replaced to maintain performance and safety. From poles and wires to transformers and substations, every part of the grid has a lifespan. Routine maintenance helps extend that lifespan, but eventually, equipment must be updated to meet modern standards. These proactive investments reduce the likelihood of outages, shorten restoration times when disruptions occur, and strengthen the backbone of our community.

The demands on the electric grid are also evolving. Homes and businesses today use more electricity than ever, and that trend will only continue.



Electric heating systems for homes and equipment, advanced HVAC systems, smart appliances and new commercial facilities add load to the local distribution system.

As these technologies take hold, the grid must be able to support increased demand while maintaining the reliability our members expect. Strategic upgrades, such as rebuilding our main transmission line between Ekalaka and Baker, are essential to ensuring we can meet these needs today and in the decades ahead.

At the same time, new technologies are reshaping how we operate. Tools such as smart meters and electronic line reclosers allow us to detect problems faster and respond more effectively. These technologies can isolate problems and provide near-real-time data that helps us plan and maintain equipment more efficiently. Implementing innovative technologies in the grid is not just a convenience — it is a necessity to ensure reliability in an increasingly complex energy landscape.

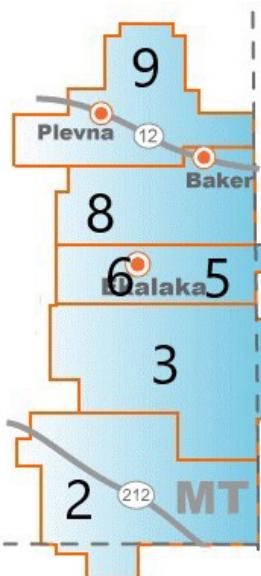
While these improvements require thoughtful planning and financial investment, the return is significant. A stronger grid supports economic growth, improves service quality, and

enhances safety for our crews and community. Most importantly, it ensures that the essential power you rely on is available whenever you need it.

In 2026, we will continue to replace distribution poles across the system. We are in year two of a five-year plan to replace our oil-filled reclosers with electronic reclosers across the system. We will begin installing additional underground infrastructure in targeted areas to reduce wildfire risk and to further utilize our new substations. We are currently working through the preliminary engineering phase to rebuild our transmission line between Ekalaka and Baker and will coordinate with our members, MTDOT, material suppliers and contractors through 2026 to begin construction in 2027.

Our commitment to reliability extends beyond infrastructure alone. It reflects our responsibility to the people and communities we serve. Every upgrade, every repair and every technology we deploy is an investment in your daily life — from the comfort of your home to the success of local businesses and schools.

We know that powering our community means preparing for the future, not just maintaining the present. By investing in our local grid today, we are building the foundation for a brighter, more resilient tomorrow. RM



District 2 and 5 trustee positions open for candidate nominations

EVERY candidate for the office of trustee shall, between January 1 and March 31 of the year in which the election will occur, present to the secretary a nominating petition giving the candidate's name, address and the district in which he/she resides. Each candidate must be a member and must possess the qualifications for a trustee as specified in Article IV, Section 3 of the Bylaws of the Cooperative. Such petition shall contain the names and signatures of at least 10 members residing in the candidate's district. Each signer of the nomination petition shall sign but one peti-

tion and add his/her address, phone number and the date of signing. The dates of signing the petition must fall on or between January 1st and March 31st of the year in which the election will occur. Also, for purposes of this petition, only one signature per member will be accepted. If more than one signature per member is present, all signatures associated with said member will count as one.

Nominating petitions are available at Southeast Electric Cooperative's office or can be obtained by going to our website at www.seecoop.com/board-directors. TM

Don't be left out in the cold

LIHEAP, Energy Share and SECO can help those in need

As the cost of living continues to arise, being able to pay home energy costs is becoming more difficult. During peak winter months, energy costs can exhaust nearly 30 percent of a low-income household's monthly income, causing many to sacrifice necessities such as food or medication.

In 1981 a federally sponsored program was created to provide financial support to qualifying households throughout the nation. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program helps those in need by offering assistance with home energy bills, energy crises, weatherization and minor energy-related home repairs.

LIHEAP is a federally funded program that Action for Eastern Montana facilitates. This program helps households with the main heating source, whether it be electric or

propane. It can also help with wood if that is the main heating source. Applications are available at Southeast Electric, local propane providers or contact Action for Eastern Montana. The application can also be download at www.aemt.org or www.seecoop.com. LIHEAP begins October 1, 2025, and ends April 30, 2026. Action for Eastern Montana can be reached at 406-377-3564/1-800-227-0703.

Energy Share of Montana is a private nonprofit organization that also helps Montanans who are facing home energy emergencies due to unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances. Because Energy Share is not a government program, they have more flexibility outside the established federal poverty guidelines. The biggest benefit is that Energy Share considers income, but helps people based on the need,

the individual situation and level of emergency.

Southeast Electric's Energy Assistance program offers a bill credit to members/or those who rent from members, who qualify for LIHEAP. All members have to do is apply for LIHEAP through Action for Eastern Montana. When members receive notification that they qualify for LIHEAP, email or bring the letter to Southeast Electric and a credit, based on the monthly usage, will be directly applied to the account. Southeast Electric's Energy Assistance program runs on a calendar year beginning January 1st and ending December 31st. Based on need, members will receive a bill credit in January and July. If you have any questions, please call Vicki at Southeast Electric 406-775-8773/8762 or email her at vfix@seecoop.com. TM

PRESIDENTS' DAY CLOSURE

Southeast Electric Cooperative's office will be closed on Monday, February 16

