



NETWORK NEWS

A publication for directors and employees of NIPCO and its member systems

December 2005

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NIPCO, Six Crewmen Aid Massive Effort To Restore Power in South Dakota

Six line crewmen from NIPCO joined the army of cooperative employees from across the Midwest to put back what Mother Nature flattened when rain, snow, wind and freezing temperatures converged on South Dakota Nov. 27 and 28.

NIPCO crewmen who volunteered for the duty were linemen Josh Goodman and Jim Marco, and heavy equipment operator Roger Armstrong, who all work out of NIPCO's Le Mars headquarters, and crew foreman Gerry

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NIPCO's crews went to the aid of

East River Electric Power Cooperative, a generating and transmission cooperative headquartered in Madison, that lost more than 1,200 transmission poles. The G&T's member systems lost more than 4,000 poles.

Altogether 9,300 miles of South Dakota's electric line were affected by the storm.

After the storm hit and the call for assistance went out,



Bruce Christensen and his fellow NIPCO crewmen braved snow, ice and cold temperatures to turn the lights back on in South Dakota. (Photo courtesy of East River Electric Power Cooperative)

Restoration continued from page 1

Fremel and lineman Bruce Christensen, who are NIPCO's crew in Harlan, Iowa. A few days later crew foreman Brad Stevenson of the Onawa crew replaced Fremel for the remainder of the 10-day project.

The NIPCO crews drove four vehicles, including a digger-derrick, a 70-foot basket truck, a line truck and a heavy-duty pickup to assist in the repair work. They also took with them a load of 55-foot and 60-foot wood poles. The crews prepared for a seven- to nine-day stay in South Dakota and ended up working 10 days. NIPCO also sent several additional loads of poles for the rebuilding project.

Initially assigned to Wagner west of Yankton, the NIPCO crews spent two days getting the substation there back in service. They later spent a half-day getting a sub at Armor back online, seven days at Parkston, and one day at Avon. Goodman said that the NIPCO crews worked together with crews from East River; Corn Belt Power Cooperative of Humboldt, Iowa; Omaha Public Power District, and Western Area Power Administration.

Goodman said the crews wore all their cold weather protective gear and traded off work duties to prevent frostbite. They dug out conductor frozen below snow drifts that ranged from two to eight feet and replaced poles broken off in the storm.

While they were working near Parkston, they received a warning call from the East River staff to stop work. A farmer had connected a generator improperly and was causing the wires to spark. No injuries were reported.

Steve Ver Mulm, NIPCO's vice president of engineering and operations, said NIPCO's crews volunteered for the work under a disaster mutual aid agreement among electric cooperatives. All costs of sending NIPCO employees will be reimbursed by East River.

East River is a wholesale electric cooperative serving homes and businesses in a 36,000 square mile area of eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. The cooperative has 2,600 miles of transmission lines. ❖



Jim Marco helps load wood poles before he and four other NIPCO crewmen left for 10 days of work helping restore the storm-damaged East River Electric Power Cooperative system.

Isolated Storm Downs Pole

It wasn't as devastating as Katrina, but Mother Nature hit northwest Iowa this fall with a reminder of her force.

An isolated severe wind and hail storm hit Everly in Clay County just after 9 a.m. Sept. 8. Electric service to the town was disrupted and residents were left with drifts of hail. The storm snapped off a 70-foot wood pole on NIPCO's line. The line was quickly isolated by NIPCO's control operator and power was restored to the Alliant substation near Everly within minutes. NIPCO crews set a new pole and returned the line to service by 3:30 p.m.

New Substation Meters Increase Accuracy, Capability

Substation meters measure the power as it flows from the transmission system into the distribution network. Accurate measurements are critical not only for billing purposes, but also for reliable delivery of power.

NIPCO is replacing nearly 100 27-year-old meters in its system over the next two years.

The new meters are the latest in computer technology, providing greater reliability with increased capabilities. The meters take less space and are much easier to fix in case of equipment failure.

Senior meter technicians Ken Kolker and Jeff Zettel changed out the first 11 meters in 2005, with 45 more scheduled to be installed in each of the next two

years. The two technicians prepared the meters in the shop and fine-tuned the installation process into just over a two-hour job. The installation must be done quickly to minimize unmetered power going through the substation.

At the substation, Kolker and Zettel read the old meter then install the new meter. After accuracy and proper operation are checked, they connect the meter to the radio communication system and SCADA remote which will transmit load management data between the substation and NIPCO.

The meter installation is a team effort between the meter technicians and the person reading meters back at NIPCO headquar-

ters, said Dennis Hill, vice president of telecommunications services.

He explained that the new meters bring more diagnostic information back to NIPCO's control center to help head off problems before they occur. For instance, if a meter circuit blows a fuse, the incident can be detected in the control center immediately with the new meters. With the old meters, a blown fuse might not be detected until the monthly meter reading or when the meter is tested. A blown fuse can result in a need to back-bill a month or more on estimated usage, which is an inconvenience for both NIPCO and its member distribution cooperatives.

The old meters have become increasingly difficult to service because parts are no longer made. The new meters will be much simpler to repair because they have integrated circuit boards. The simple change of circuit board will get a malfunctioning meter back in operation.

"Substation meters are NIPCO's cash registers, and it's important that they work accurately to measure the power," Hill said. "These new meters with all their technological capabilities will help NIPCO make its power even more reliable." ❖



Senior meter technicians Ken Kolker, left, and Jeff Zettel check one of the new digital meters for accuracy after they installed it at the Le Mars Industrial Substation.

NIPCO's Bev Bremer Leads Her Last Tour of Power Stations

NIPCO's Bev Bremer packed the bus and shepherded electric cooperative tourists for the last time this August.

Since 1988, Bremer has been hosting tours sponsored by NIPCO. The co-op invites consumers in its seven member systems to spend three days learning where their electricity originates. Participants tour Basin Electric's energy production facilities to see the "story behind the switch." They also visit Oahe Dam at Pierre, S.D., which currently provides about 30 percent of NIPCO's power.

Participants on the popular trips not only learn about electricity, but also enjoy good food and camaraderie of other co-op members.

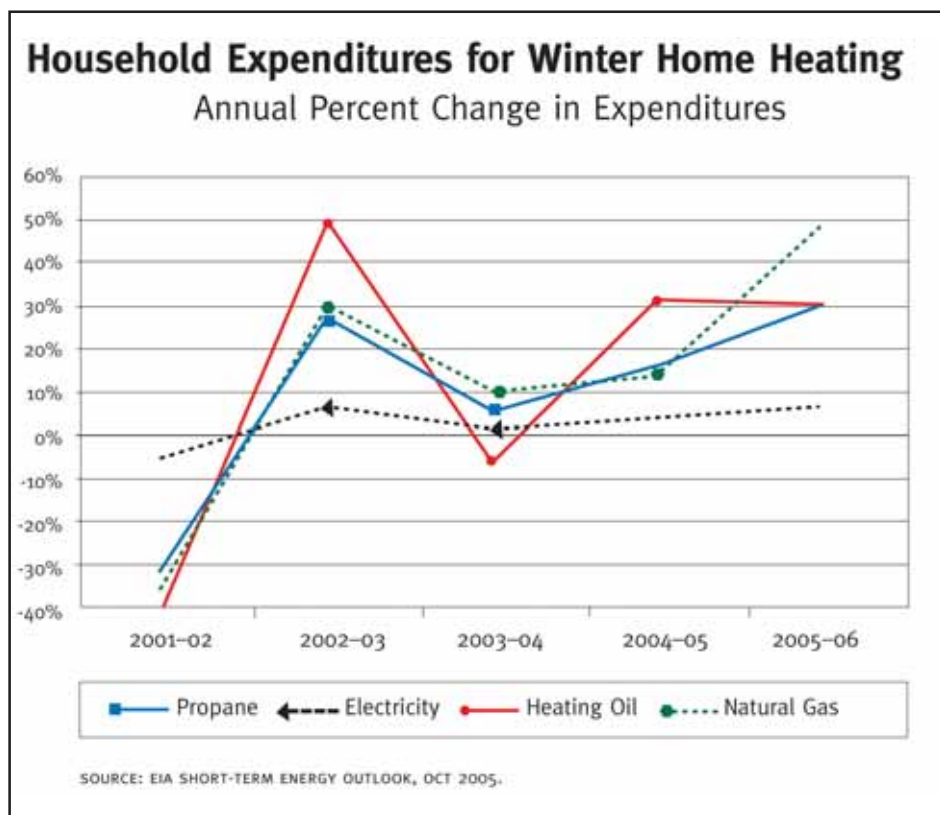


Bev Bremer, left, and one of her tour guests cut cake at a farewell reception hosted by Basin Electric on the occasion of Bremer's last tour gig. (Photo courtesy of Basin Electric)

On Aug. 25, Bremer was honored with a cake and coffee reception at Basin's Antelope Valley Station to celebrate her

last tour to North Dakota. "The tours have been great fun and I will miss them," she says. "The special treatment at AVS this time was quite a surprise." Even though Bremer retired from NIPCO in 2002, she has continued coordinating the tours.

Bremer says she has hosted about 50 tours for about 2,300 people over the years. Her favorite part of the tour is visiting with members. "The most satisfying part is when I read the evaluation sheets and see the members are impressed with the reclamation efforts, they think their electricity is a bargain and they understand that, as members, they are part of this great cooperative organization. This shows me that every bit of effort that goes into the tour is worth it because we are achieving our goal," she says. ❖



Employees Increase United Way Giving

NIPCO and its employees raised a record \$4,080 for the Le Mars United Way in a fund drive this fall.

That's up nearly 5 percent from last year's campaign.

The drive began with a presentation by Jim Hoss, a director of the Le Mars United Way, at a NIPCO safety meeting. Marina Fuhrman of Jackson Recovery Center, also talked about how United Way helps pay for substance abuse treatment services the center provides in Plymouth County.

NIPCO employees who contribute to the United Way are eligible for drawings for NIPCO garments and four hours of vacation time.

This is the 11th year NIPCO and its employees have participated in the United Way. A total of \$33,294 has been raised over those years.

Keith Schiltz, Becky Lauters and Jeff Zettel serve on the employee United Way committee. ❖



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North West REC member Schuster Company received a 2005 Venture Award from the Iowa Area Development Group for its expansion and contribution to Iowa's economy. From left are North West directors Kenneth Maass, Steve Brown, Gerald Klemme; Lyle Korver, North West CEO; Steve Schuster, vice president, Schuster Company; Joel Orthmann, North West board president; North West director Alan Lucken; Glenn English, CEO of NRECA; Rand Fisher, president of IADG.



Shelby County Cookers, LLC, member of Nishnabotna Valley REC, received a 2005 Venture Award recognizing the company's expansion and contribution to Iowa's economy. From left are Rand Fisher, IADG president; Brad Poppen and Brett Elliott, Shelby County Cookers; John Euchner, Nishnabotna Valley CEO; Richard Ferry, Nishnabotna Valley board president, and Glenn English, NRECA CEO.

Higher Supply Prices Pinch Electric Cooperative Budgets

Hurting from higher prices at the pump and in the check-out lane? That phenomenon doesn't affect only individual consumers.

Electric cooperatives also are being pinched by higher prices for unleaded and diesel fuel to keep vehicles on the road, and for poles, wire and other building materials.

Through September, NIPCO paid an average \$2.41 per gallon for diesel fuel and \$2.10 per gallon for unleaded gasoline. The average price paid for diesel

in 2003 was \$1.47 and in 2004 \$1.78. A gallon of unleaded cost NIPCO an average \$1.39 in 2003 and \$1.74 in 2004.

The price of both wood and steel 60-foot Class 2 poles also rocketed in 2005. NIPCO purchased 67 60-foot Class 2 wood poles for \$897 each, up 50 percent from the \$600 paid per pole in both 2002 and 2003.

NIPCO paid \$1,460 each for 12 Class 2 steel poles this year. NIPCO last bought steel poles in 1998 when they cost \$760 each.

The call for new and enlarged substations in the NIPCO system put NIPCO in the market for structural steel. This year NIPCO ordered 46,700 pounds of structural steel for substations. The price was \$1.07 per pound or \$49,934. In 2004, NIPCO built three new substations and paid 88 cents a pound for 107,000 pounds of steel.

According to the publication *Electric Co-op Today*, steel prices in commodity markets have been up an average of 15.5 percent since 2004. Bruce Shostak, NIPCO's civil engineer, said he was pleased with this year's steel price. He had expected bids to be in the \$1.50 per pound range. The larger the purchase of steel, the better the per-pound price, Shostak explained.

Substation construction also calls for large amounts of concrete.

Three new substations NIPCO energized in early 2005 used 145 yards of concrete which averaged \$69.11 per yard. Concrete for the Neola Substation, built in 2002, was \$61.46 per yard. When a second transformer was added to Eagle Substation in 1992, concrete went for \$49.47 a yard.

The price of many metal products that NIPCO buys also has increased. Static wire pur-



The price of structural steel has increased during the past year. Here NIPCO crews assemble steel at the new Southern Substation in Oakland. (Photo courtesy of Mary Johnson, Nishnabotna Valley REC)

ITEM	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996
60-foot Class 2 wood poles	\$ 897	\$ *	\$ 601	\$ 600	\$ 623	\$ 596	\$ *	\$ 629	\$ 632	\$ 656
Class 2 steel poles	\$ 1,460	\$ *	\$ *	\$ *	\$ 856	\$ *	\$ *	\$ 760	\$ *	\$ *
Unleaded gasoline/gallon average	\$ 2.10	\$ 1.74	\$ 1.39	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Diesel fuel/gallon average	\$ 2.41	\$ 1.78	\$ 1.47	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Galvanized steel/pound	\$ 1.07	\$ 0.88	\$ *	\$ 0.75	\$ 0.90	\$ *	\$ 1.17	\$ 3.38	\$ *	\$ *
Concrete/cubic yard	\$ 69.11	\$ *	\$ 71.81	\$ 61.46	\$ 65.21	\$ *	\$ *	\$ *	\$ *	\$ 52.95
Static (guy) wire.foot	\$ 24.55	\$ *	\$ *	\$ *	\$ 14.33	\$ *	\$ *	\$ *	\$ *	\$ *
No. 6 solid copper conductor/pound	\$ 2.30	\$ *	\$ 1.27	\$ *	\$ 1.31	\$ 1.32	\$ *	\$ *	\$ *	\$ *
4/0 copper wire/pound	\$ *	\$ 1.98	\$ 1.42	\$ 1.17	\$	\$	\$ *	\$ *	\$ 1.82	\$ *
2/0 copper conductor/pound	\$ 2.57	\$ 1.93	\$ 1.38	\$ *	\$ 1.22	\$	\$ *	\$ *	\$ *	\$ *
336 MCM aluminum conductor/pound	\$ 1.44	\$ 1.55	\$ 1.19	\$ *	\$ *	\$ 1.27	\$ *	\$ 1.08	\$ *	\$ 1.10
4/0 aluminum conductor/pound	\$ 1.20	\$ 1.03	\$ *	\$ *	\$ 0.92	\$ 1.11	\$ 1.05	\$ 0.91	\$ *	\$ *

chased in 2005 cost 24.55 cents per foot, compared to the 2001 cost of 14.33 cents a foot. NIPCO bought 30,000 feet of the wire this year.

The price of some sizes of conductor has decreased, while others have increased. No. 6 solid copper wire cost \$2.30 per pound in 2005, up 81 percent from \$1.27 a pound paid in 2003. The price of 4/0 aluminum conductor was \$1.20 per pound for NIPCO this year, compared to \$1.03 per pound in 2003 and 92 cents a pound paid in 2001. Aluminum conductor size 2/0 cost \$2.57 per pound in 2005, while it was only \$1.38 per pound two years earlier. But 336 MCM aluminum conductor was \$1.44 per pound in 2005, compared to the \$1.55 per pound NIPCO paid the previous year. The 336 conductor had cost \$1.19 per pound in 2003. ❖

Crew Foreman Calls It Quits After 38 Years

Longtime NIPCO crew foreman Bernie Wiederholt has retired, but don't look for him in a porch rocking chair.

His last day at NIPCO was planned for Nov. 29, but he worked into early December when five NIPCO crew members went to assist South Dakota cooperatives recovering from a snow and ice storm. Wiederholt's plans for retirement include "looking for another job." A NIPCO employee since November 1967, Wiederholt said he doesn't know whether he'll be working part-time or full-time, but he definitely won't be idling his retirement away.



Wiederholt joined NIPCO as a heavy equipment operator when the cooperative had only 46 substations. During his career, NIPCO added 27 substations and eight major switching stations. Wiederholt later became a NIPCO lineman, and then became crew foreman in 1991.

Two memorable occasions on the job both involved ice. An Easter 1975 storm took out 125 NIPCO poles between Ida Grove and Denison, and another storm caused damage to the system in the Shelby, Iowa, area. Wiederholt said icy conditions slowed travel so much it took at least 6 1/2 hours for his crew to get to Shelby -- normally a two-hour drive.

At a NIPCO employee gathering to note Wiederholt's retirement, he was commended for his commitment to safety and his good driving record. ❖

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NETWORK NEWS

Published by
Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative
P. O. Box 240, 31002 C38
Le Mars, Iowa 51031-0240
712-546-4141
www.nipco.coop

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Area Linemen Help Clean Up Katrina

Eight linemen from four NIPCO member cooperatives aided in power restoration work in Mississippi following Hurricane Katrina. The four crews took trucks and equipment and spent about two weeks working to get the lights on again following the devastation.

NIPCO area linemen who went to Mississippi were Nate Bauer and Andy McGill of Woodbury REC; Aaron Macumber and Wade Pitt of WIPCO; Steven Jens and Aaron Nippert of Nishnabotna Valley REC, and Kert Barnum and Robert Wakehouse of Harrison County REC. Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative sent cash donations to assist cooperatives recover.

The linemen and their cooperatives are examples of two of the cooperative principles: cooperation among cooperatives and commitment to community. They were among 30 Iowa cooperative linemen helping in recovery work. ❖