

MESSENGER



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With something as important as electricity, surprises are to be avoided. Minnkota's energy supply team is using all the tools available to protect the co-op from unpredictable market pricing.

On the cover: Minnkota Energy Marketer Dylan Walski (left) leads a team discussion on current energy pricing in the Midcontinent Independent System Operator market.

Minnkota Messenger is published six times a year by Minnkota Power Cooperative. Its mission is to communicate Minnkota's perspectives and concerns to its members, elected officials, employees and other business audiences. For editorial inquiries, call (701) 795-4282 or email bfladhammer@minnkota.com.

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Minnkota Power Cooperative is a generation and transmission cooperative headquartered in Grand Forks, North Dakota. It supplies wholesale electricity to 11 member-owner distribution cooperatives, three in eastern North Dakota and eight in northwestern Minnesota. Minnkota also serves as operating agent for the Northern Municipal Power Agency, an association of 12 municipal utilities in the same service region. Together, the Joint System serves more than 171,000 consumers.

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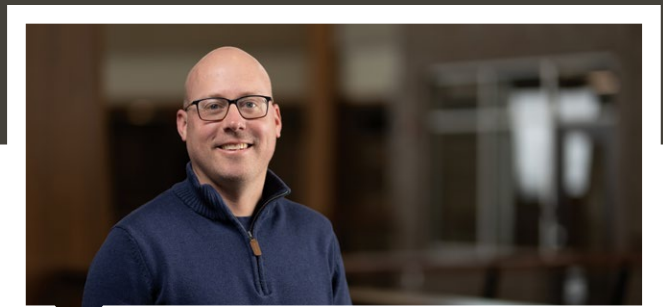
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SEEKING STABILITY IN MARKET VOLATILITY



Minnkota Energy Marketer David Sebenaler (left) assesses current market conditions with Energy Marketer Sarah Horner.

Minnkota's energy marketing team serves as first defense against energy price fluctuations

By Kaylee Cusack // Photography Michael Hoeft

Participation in the regional wholesale energy market can be a white-knuckle thrill ride.

Gone are the days of predictable pricing and casual assessments of wind reports. When Dan Tre-

bil started in energy marketing at Minnkota Power Cooperative 13 years ago, his workdays, even weeks, were mostly docile. In 2026, as the co-op's senior manager of energy supply, his crew of energy marketers is working to tame a wild beast that keeps getting wilder.

"The difference is night and day," Trebil said of the current volatility of the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) energy market. "We spend a lot more time now looking at wind forecasts than we used to, and this team collaborates with just about every department in the building."

Minnkota's Paige Johnson began her career in energy marketing four years ago. "In the last two years especially, the pace has really amped up," she said. "There's so much to pay attention to in

every avenue. All the transmission projects coming through and the market going crazy – you have to be very present in the energy marketer role."

The energy market – or the system through which utilities buy or sell energy across the regional electric grid to balance generation with demand – has become more volatile for several reasons. The dominating factor is the retirement of reliable power plants and their replacement with weather-dependent generation resour-

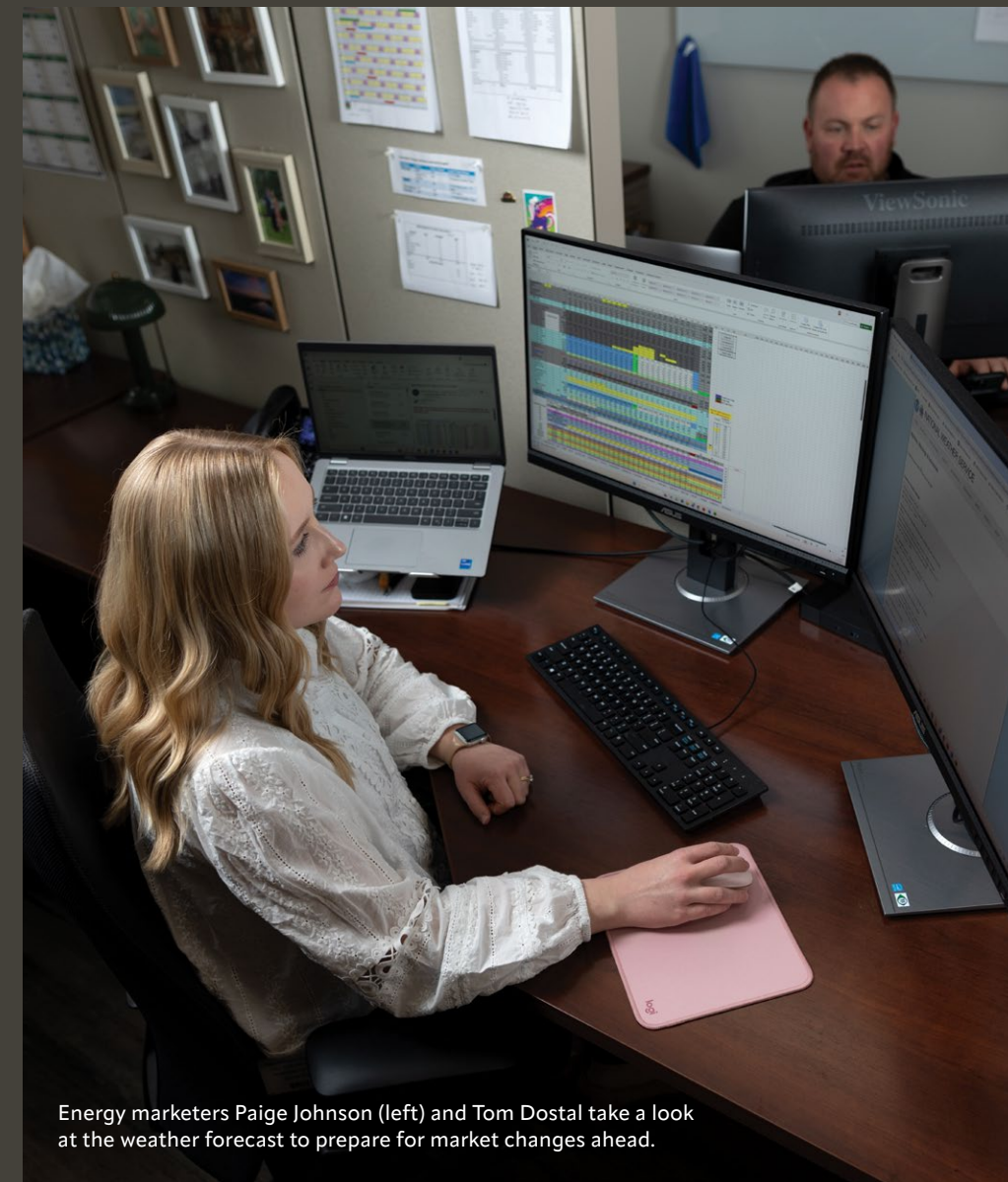
ces across the MISO footprint, which stretches from Manitoba, Canada, down to Louisiana. This major resource transition is happening at a time when the demand for electricity is forecasted to grow significantly.

"Ten years ago, the majority of resources on the system were reliable, baseload, dispatchable generators. They used fossil fuel, but they could be controlled. You could run them up and down as needed with demand," Trebil explained. "With wind and solar

generators, you're at the mercy of Mother Nature."

As wind and solar are added to MISO's capacity, they increasingly drive market pricing. On days filled with wind and sunshine, energy is typically readily available. On days that are either still or cloudy, pricing can reach extreme highs.

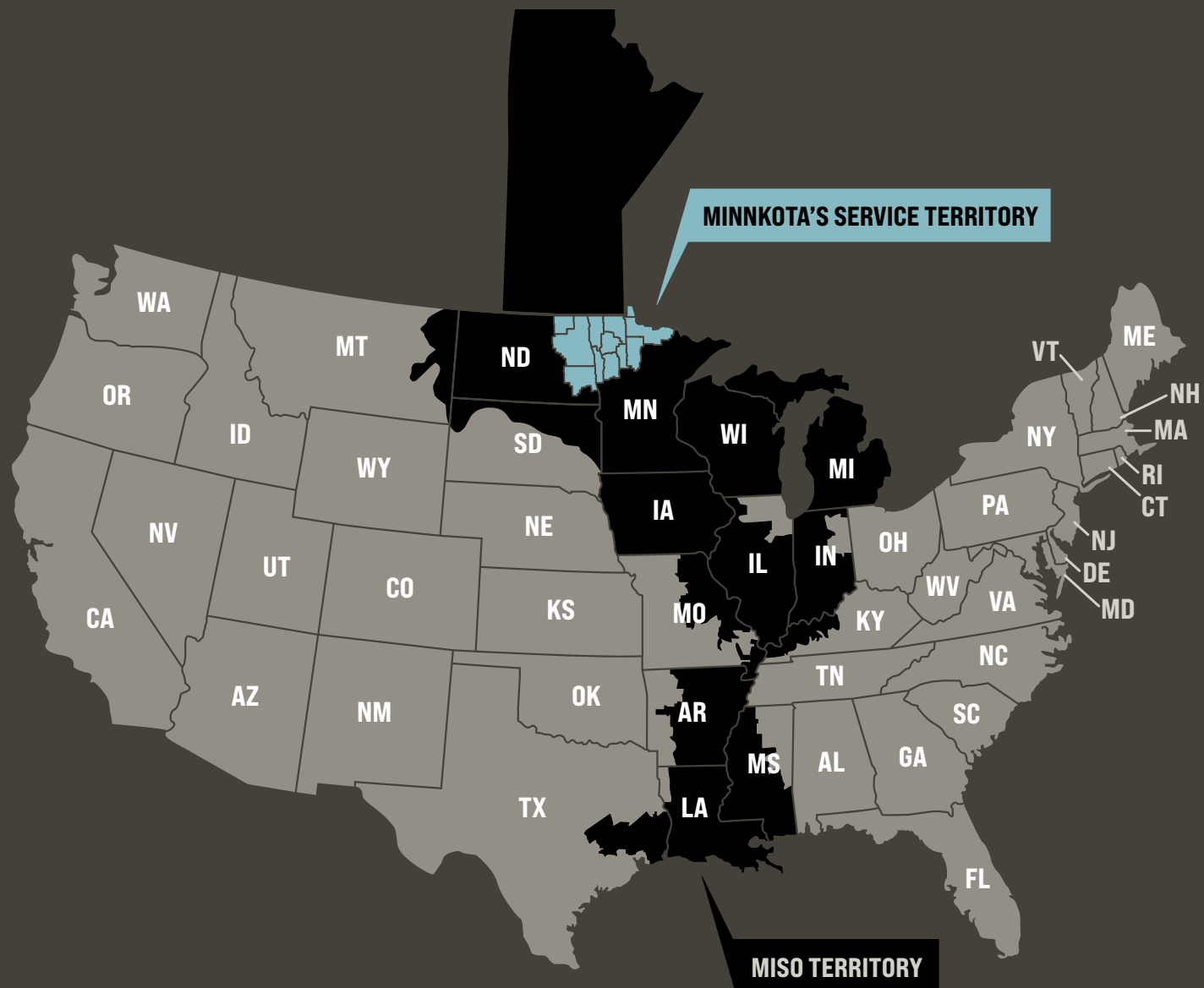
"An example of where we start to see a lot of volatility is with solar penetration," Trebil said, noting that solar panels stop producing



Energy marketers Paige Johnson (left) and Tom Dostal take a look at the weather forecast to prepare for market changes ahead.

(Below) While wind generation is dependent on weather, baseload generation like Minnkota's Milton R. Young Station offers predictability in the market.





quickly when the sun drops in the evening, which also happens to be the time demand rises as people arrive home. "When solar bleeds off, it's currently difficult for the market to respond with resources that can ramp up quick enough to mitigate that swing."

Transmission congestion is also impacting market volatility. There are currently more bottlenecks in the transmission system because of MISO's changing resource mix and growing loads across the sys-

tem. Thus, more pathways from generation to end-user are needed. MISO member utilities and participants are investing historic amounts into building out more transmission, but that buildout will take many years to complete.

Amid all of this, MISO knew stronger price signals were needed to ensure its participants were planning their resources appropriately. In April 2025, MISO increased its maximum energy price threshold from \$3,500 per megawatt-hour

(MWh) to \$10,000/MWh. For comparison, rates during stability hang around \$20-\$50/MWh.

Protection from market exposure

If Minnkota needs to buy power during periods of extreme market volatility, the financial impact can be significant. For instance, being short 400 MW and purchasing replacement energy at peak prices for just four hours would cost about \$16 million. If those condi-

tions persist, the total cost can climb quickly, creating a substantial financial burden.

To prevent that exposure, the energy marketing team has to plan ahead.

"In our daily schedules, we pay particular attention to those two hours other utilities are losing solar to be extra careful," Johnson said. "We might bump up our load a little bit so that we're long in the real-time market, or we'll be cautious with our wind expectations if we're not 100% sure that it's going to be there."

"We can mitigate some risks in the day-of market. But if you have a plant trip offline, or something similar, you're still exposed during that timeframe," Trebil added. "That's where having demand response in your back pocket really becomes valuable."

Minnkota's demand response program allows the co-op to shed nearly one-third of its load when necessary. The program is popular with its volunteer member-consumers, who sign up and receive lower electricity rates in return. The program has been essential in protecting Minnkota from high market prices when demand is high across MISO (like during a long cold snap) or when generation is lower than expected (minimal wind or plant outages).

MISO continues to explore ways to alleviate extreme market swings, but there's no one easy fix. In 2023, the operator switched from an annual to a four-season peak demand resource adequacy construct. This aligned needed generation capacity with shifting seasonal risks (peak demand



Dan Trebil, senior manager of energy supply, says the wholesale energy market has undergone a world of change since he started marketing 13 years ago.

usually occurred in summer, but is now shifting to the winter season as well). In 2025, MISO enacted a reliability-based demand curve, which has helped to provide more accurate values for additional capacity. Even more reforms are being assessed for the years ahead.

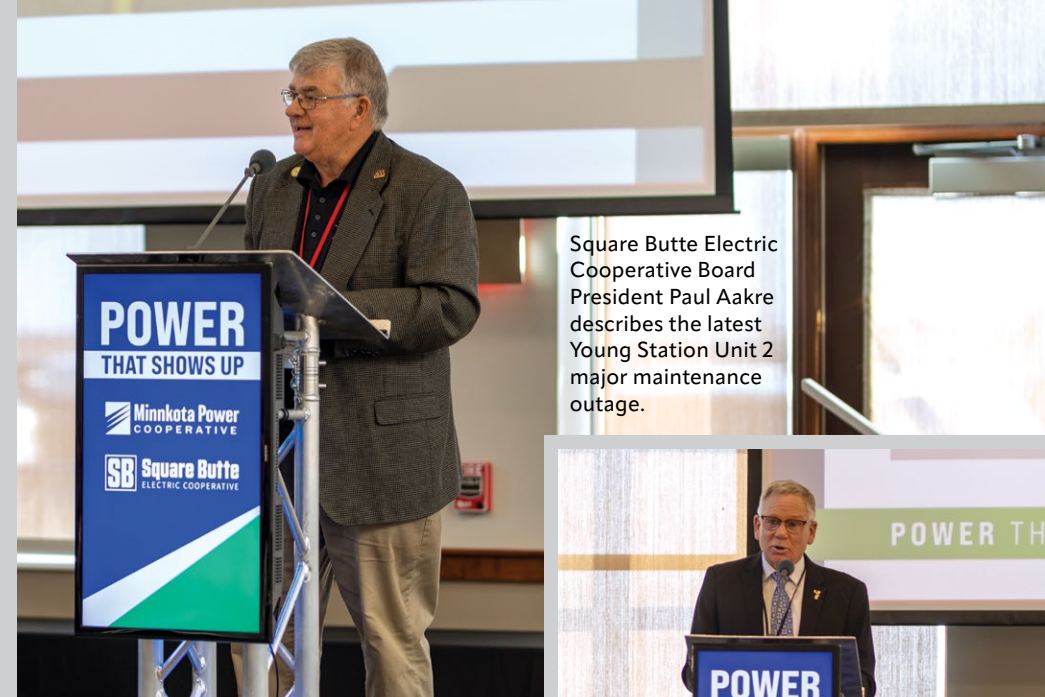
Minnkota is also exploring additional measures of its own, including the analysis of new generation resources that could raise regional dispatchable generation capacity and strengthen its all-of-the-above energy strategy.

Of course, one of the most powerful arrows in Minnkota's quiver will always be the exceptional range of its people. Trebil and his energy marketing team will continue to meet every morning, on chaotic days and quiet ones, to ensure the co-op is protected from volatility at every angle.

"We have a great group of people," Trebil said. "We've gathered a good diversity of skills. I think each one of them has a different element they're very strong at, and that makes them a good team."



Minnkota President and CEO Mac McLennan addresses attendees of the co-op's 86th annual meeting.



Square Butte Electric Cooperative Board President Paul Aakre describes the latest Young Station Unit 2 major maintenance outage.



Mark Habedank, Minnkota board chair, delivers the meeting's opening remarks.

POWER THAT SHOWS UP

Minnkota, Square Butte Electric Cooperative highlight resilience in annual meetings

By Kaylee Cusack // Photography Michael Hoeft

Every electric cooperative experiences adversity. In 2025, it was Minnkota Power Cooperative's turn to shoulder the weight of unforeseen challenges. Historic summer storms toppled transmission lines from one end of the service territory to the other. Extended plant outages required perseverance

from project planners. Volatile energy markets tested the strength of the co-op's power supply strategy and financial foundations.

As Minnkota Board Chair Mark Habedank took the stage of Minnkota's 86th annual meeting on March 27, he spoke with refreshing clarity.

"If I had to describe this past year in just a few words, I'd say this: Our people showed up," he said to the employees, members, delegates and guests filling Minnkota's Grand Forks conference center. "Time and time again, our employees demonstrated the professionalism, the skill and the commitment that keeps our cooperative strong and moving forward. As a board, we could not be more proud of how our team performed under pressure."

"Power That Shows Up" was the theme of the annual meeting shared with Square Butte Electric

Cooperative, for whom Minnkota serves as operating agent. Although 2025 was a challenge, the year ended with positive metrics. Reliability remained high, projects progressed and, most importantly, safety stayed at the forefront.

Paul Aakre, president of the Square Butte board, described the hurdles of the major maintenance outage planned for the Milton R. Young Station's Unit 2 generator last fall. Starting Sept. 3, plant staff and hundreds of contractors were set to spend six weeks inspecting Unit 2 and completing equipment repairs and replacements. However, six weeks turned into 10 weeks as new projects were discovered and supply chain delays held up critical equipment.

Plant crews didn't give up. They showed up. They found a way to not only complete every project, but to do so on budget and with a spotless safety record.

"Here's a takeaway from the pressures faced at the plant in 2025. Not one lost-time injury was reported at the Young Station last year. Not one," Aakre said. "Since 2020, the plant has only reported one lost-time incident, a remarkable statistic in this physically intensive industry."

'A moment that requires courage'

Following a report of co-op financials, Minnkota Senior Vice President of Power Supply Andrew Sorbo provided an overview of Minnkota's current generation assets of coal, wind and hydro, as

An impressive 2025 power plant safety record was commended by Andrew Sorbo, Minnkota senior vice president of power supply.

well as a review of wholesale energy market trends of the past year. Sorbo noted that 2025 produced an increasingly volatile market in which energy prices could soar and drop in a matter of minutes, driven by a higher penetration of weather-dependent wind and solar resources, accelerating load growth and transmission congestion.

"Market volatility is not going away," he said. "There are no simple fixes to any of these issues. It'll be something that everybody has to continue to work with. Fuel and shaft diversity will remain critical. Reliability has always been at the forefront, and now flexibility of resources is becoming critical as well."



In addition to power supply initiatives like Flickertail Wind Farm (anticipated in 2028 near New Rockford, North Dakota) and Project Tundra (a proposal to capture carbon dioxide emissions from the Young Station), Minnkota is also exploring natural gas generation as a new element of its portfolio. Sorbo explained that exploration is still in its early stages, but natural gas could prove to be a long-term advantage for the load growth of Minnkota's entire membership.

Sorbo handed the stage over to Dan Inman, senior vice president of power delivery and chief information technology officer. Inman began by commending the work of the operations crews

and other employees who responded quickly to a June 20 derecho storm system that damaged more than 135 transmission structures and led to 90 substation outages.

"It swept through from the west all the way to our system into the east – something that we've never seen before," he recalled of that summer night. "We were getting texts way into the night, talking about our response plans. Our staff stood up and got the job done. We were able to get power on quickly and effectively to our members in record time."

Inman updated the audience on several transmission projects underway, including the

development of the new Agassiz substation near Harwood, North Dakota, which will help member Cass County Electric Cooperative serve a planned data center nearby and provide broad reliability benefits to the region. He also spoke of the growing importance of utility cybersecurity, as artificial intelligence begins to take central focus in so many aspects of life.

Upon the successful election of new slates of board directors for both Minnkota and Square Butte, Minnkota President and CEO Mac McLennan delivered a final report. Like the speakers before him, he highlighted the sheer resilience of the cooperative family in an energy era that continues to become harder to navigate, with rising demand, changing regulations and other obstacles creating friction.

"Adversity is an opportunity in and of itself," McLennan said. "You're going to learn from the things that happen to you. Challenges will teach you something. Now the question is whether we learn from them or not."

McLennan said the co-op is heading into "uncharted territory" but must keep its eyes open for opportunities. And pursuing those opportunities will take an enormous amount of teamwork between employees, member cooperatives and industry partners.

"We're facing a moment that requires courage and thoughtfulness and long-term thinking," he said. "Staying united through all of this...trying to find solutions all together and trying to take advantage of opportunities, is what ultimately I think will drive this success."

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Red River Valley Co-op Power

Service Awards

The **Red Lantern Award** is presented at the annual meeting in recognition and appreciation of 10 years of service on a member distribution cooperative board.



Sue Kringen, *Beltrami Electric Cooperative*



Paul Aakre, *PKM Electric Cooperative*



Mark Hatton, *PKM Electric Cooperative*

RISING FROM THE ASHES

Minnkota supports local print shop following major fire

By Ben Fladhammer
Photography Michael Hoeft

On a bitter January morning in Grand Forks, under a sky thick with smoke, Jay and Phil Knutson sat in their vehicles and watched more than a building burn.

They watched a piece of their family history slip away.

Since 1969, Knutson Printing Company had quietly supported the community from this shop, producing everything from business cards and booklets to event programs and engineering prints. While most don't see their presses humming steadily in the background of daily life, their work is visible in almost every corner of the Greater Grand Forks community and beyond.

But on Jan. 17, none of it could be saved.

"I kept thinking they were going to win the fight," Jay said, recalling the firefighters battling the blaze. "You keep telling yourself they're

going to beat this thing. It just didn't happen."

As flames consumed the shop – along with its equipment, records and memories – the brothers' phones buzzed with calls and texts. Most offered sympathy. One offered something more.

That call came from Troy Ahonen, Minnkota's print production supervisor. After confirming support from the cooperative's leadership, he reached out that morning offering the Knutsons immediate access to the cooperative's print facilities and an opportunity to continue serving their customers while they figured out their next steps.

The Knutson Printing building was destroyed on Jan. 17 following a major fire.



(Left to right) Travis McCleish, Minnkota digital print specialist, Jay Knutson, Phil Knutson, and Troy Ahonen, Minnkota print production supervisor, stand in the cooperative's full-service print shop.



Once the blaze was extinguished, the cold January weather covered much of the debris in ice.

Submitted photos

Over the next seven weeks, the Knutsons completed dozens of print jobs using Minnkota's equipment. Orders were fulfilled. Customers were served. The business, though displaced, remained operational.

The Knutsons paid for materials and showed appreciation by regularly bringing in donuts for their new coworkers. What could have been a complete shutdown instead became a period of continuity between the two teams.

"Troy would call and say, 'What papers do you need? What papers do you use the most? I'm going to order them,'" Phil said. "And it was just boom, boom, boom – everything was ready to go."

A lifetime in the shop

For Jay and Phil, the loss of the building carried a deeper weight. Knutson Printing is where they grew up.

Their parents, Vernon and Marian, started the business in the same building near the University of North Dakota on April 1, 1969.

"So the story goes," Jay said, "my dad was working at the Grand Forks Herald and told the guys he was going to start his own printing company. They said, 'Vern, you're a fool for starting your own company.' So he started it on April Fools' Day."

As children, the brothers spent their days in the shop playing in the basement before eventually working upstairs on the print floor.

"It was tough work, because everything was hot metal," Jay said,

recalling the heavy mechanical presses of the early years with no air conditioning.

Over time, they took on more responsibility, eventually running day-to-day operations before fully taking over in 1995. They guided the business through decades of change, from traditional typesetting to modern digital printing.

Moving forward

Today, the Knutsons are focused on what comes next.

New equipment has been ordered, and a temporary location in Grand Forks is up and running.

Plans are underway to rebuild, with hopes of returning to the original, historic site.

The future may even include the next generation. Phil's two sons have shown interest in the business and are already helping in various ways.

Through it all, one thing has stood out: the local support.

Following the fire, the response from the community has been overwhelming, the brothers said.

"That's why we buy local," Phil said. "That's why we eat local. That's why we spend local."

For Ahonen, the collaboration doesn't end here. The two operations continue to share ideas, materials and camaraderie. He calls the experience one of the most meaningful moments of his 40-year career in the printing industry.

"I was really pleased that we stayed true to our cooperative values," Ahonen said. "We give back in a lot of ways, but this was different. This was allowing someone to come onto our site, use our equipment and keep going. It was a very proud moment."

"I felt horrible for Jay and Phil," Ahonen said. "I consider them good friends and colleagues in the business. We have a really good working relationship. There was no question that we were going to help and do our part to keep a family-run business alive when they were going through a tough time."

For the Knutsons, it changed everything.

"What a huge relief," Phil said. "Not having to worry about that was a blessing. Troy had it lined up, and we started printing the jobs that were burned up in the fire almost right away."

Making the day-to-day work

Minnkota operates a full-service print shop used primarily to support the cooperative and its member systems. After quickly securing approval to bring the Knutsons into the facility, Ahonen and Travis McCleish, Minnkota's digital print specialist, prepared the shop to run two operations side by side.

"The challenging part is just keeping track of all the jobs," Ahonen said. "I just wanted to make sure everyone had what they needed and that we could accommodate each other."

Troy Ahonen (left) and Jay Knutson work together on a paper folding machine inside Minnkota's print shop.





FINDING REAL HUMANITY IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

University of North Dakota embraces AI as future of education, societal problem-solving

By Kaylee Cusack
Photography Michael Hoeft

Anna Kinney understands the tension between higher education and artificial intelligence. In her previous role at the University of North Dakota (UND), she led the campus Writing Center, not only helping students, staff and faculty with their writing projects, but assisting in integrating strong writing practices across the university's curriculum.

When AI writing tools went mainstream, Kinney's friends and family began to voice concerns about her future at UND. But she didn't necessarily see AI as a threat. She saw it as the next stage of education – and she was ready to help others see that as well.

"Writing teachers and writing scholars have long been thinking critically about the writing process in the face

Anna Kinney is the AI Instructional Manager for the University of North Dakota, a new role on campus.

of technology. Even copy and paste was a scary moment for many," Kinney said. "So, when ChatGPT dropped, writing scholars in our field had already been thinking deeply about AI. I was in a fortunate position, in my field and position on campus, to help support our colleagues as they started really grappling with what AI meant for their disciplines."

Kinney now serves as UND's AI Instructional Manager, a new role charged with building an AI-across-the-curriculum program. The position is thought to be the first of its kind in North Dakota, with a goal of assisting de-

partments and faculty in thinking about what AI means specifically for their field and then creating appropriate curriculums to ensure that student learning is preserved.

This new focus on responsibly integrating AI into learning is just one facet of UND's larger goal of not only embracing the promise of AI, but leading the state in AI education and research. Over the past two years, UND has introduced two new degree programs centered on AI: a Ph.D. in Artificial Intelligence and a graduate certificate in AI and Machine Learning. At his State of the University address in 2025, UND President

Andy Armacost proclaimed that UND would become "North Dakota's artificial intelligence university."

"There's no better place to have the discussions about the technology, and what its impact is on our humanity, than at the University of North Dakota," he said during his August speech. "We have the people who are interested in these discussions across all disciplines. We want all our students to have these tools, but they should also have skepticism about abandoning their human responsibilities."



Anna Kinney leads a panel discussion of AI's place in society and learning at the 2026 AI and Human Innovation Showcase.

UND students and faculty researchers display their AI-driven work at the AI and Human Innovation Showcase on March 20.



AI across campus

Humanity has become the heart of UND's AI leadership. Although the technical learning behind AI is crucial and supported through degree programs and courses, UND is also seeking solutions to two large questions: How do we retain the strengths of humanity in an era of AI? And how can we leverage AI to help people?

On March 20, UND's AI and Human Innovation Initiative (co-chaired by Kinney and UND Theatre Arts Department Chair Emily Cherry Oliver) hosted its second annual AI showcase, an opportunity for students, faculty, staff and the greater community to come together for a discussion of AI and celebrate the interdisciplinary AI-related work of those across campus. The event began with keynote and panel discussions,



Dr. Naima Kaabouch, director of the UND AIR Center

followed by a poster and digital exhibit of more than a dozen student and faculty research projects combining AI with fields like education, law, medicine and engineering.

"Our hope is that this showcase creates more conversations and collaborations between UND and the community, and also that it creates more innovation within

North Dakota," Cherry Oliver explained from the wings of the event's exhibition floor. "President Armacost has made this the year of humanity in AI, which very closely aligns with what the initiative is trying to do. He's really challenging all of us to think about not just the multi-uses of AI, but about who we are as humans, as artists and as thinkers within the AI sphere."

UND has taken interdisciplinary AI research a step further with the formation of the Artificial Intelligence Research (AIR) Center. The center has many goals, including developing cutting-edge AI solutions to solve complex problems, training the next generation of AI researchers, promoting ethical standards in AI and fostering partnerships with multiple sectors. But according to Dr. Naima Kaabouch, UND professor and AIR Center director, all these goals boil down to one core objective.

"The objective is to help humanity – to bring real benefits to people," said Kaabouch, who joined UND as faculty 20 years ago and has since become a campus authority on AI, cybersecurity and autonomous systems. "The Center has several leads and students, staff and faculty, all interested in using AI to solve real-world problems."

While engineering applications of AI are central, the AIR Center also serves as an umbrella for important AI work happening across eight research areas: fundamental AI models, autonomous systems, cybersecurity, infrastructure inspection, biology and medicine, physics and chemistry, aerospace and aviation, and education and social sciences.

Kaabouch spoke of key research underway in the AIR Center that would directly impact North Dakotans, including using AI to enhance power grid security, train K-12 teachers, and more quickly and accurately predict severe weather and flooding.

"We have flooding every year in North Dakota," she said. "I have

had online students in the past tell me, 'I can't meet today because my farm is flooded with water.' So, we want to predict how the flood will progress so people can take action."

The AIR Center has also reached out to departments at North Dakota State University in hopes of collaborating on AI research specific to agriculture. Connections have already been formed with entities around the state, and even around the country, for the sake of strengthening society with AI.

"If you look at every field, every sector, you can see that AI can speed up progress and find a better way of doing things," Kaabouch said. "By doing great work and helping the state and the country, we are highlighting the quality of research UND is doing. We have a great team, all trying to use AI in their field."

UND realizes that the idea of AI in education isn't just one thing. It isn't simply creating an AI use policy or offering an AI fundamentals course. It's taking a holistic look at AI, the ethics behind it, the possibilities it creates and how it can be used to bring out the best in us.

"I think that one of the things UND does really well is create community, and I think that that will remain central regardless of how AI changes," Kinney said. "We lead with our people, and I really believe that will be our greatest strength as we continue to move forward as people who are willing to ask the questions, lead with their values and just never lose sight of the purpose of what we're doing here."



"AI gets compared to a million things. It gets compared to the calculator, to the Industrial Revolution, to the steam engine. And I think it's bigger than all of those things. It's a huge shift in the relationship that we have with being educators and being educated."

Anna Kinney
UND AI Instructional Manager



TWO RED WATERS, ONE CO-OP CURRENT

Rich Whitcomb named dual CEO of Red River Valley Co-op Power, Red Lake Electric

By Kaylee Cusack // Photography Michael Hoeft

Rural electric cooperatives are known to follow seven core principles, reflecting values of democratic member participation, autonomy and community. One of those principles is Cooperation Among Cooperatives, and neighboring Red Lake Electric Cooperative

and Red River Valley Co-op Power (RRVCP) believe they've found just the formula for that kind of collaboration.

On Feb. 1, RRVCP CEO Rich Whitcomb took an additional co-op under his wing, becoming the new CEO of Red Lake Electric. The

dual leadership role was a result of two cooperative boards who understood working together provided an opportunity to find management efficiencies.

"Both boards felt that this new arrangement was worth the effort, with the knowledge we're

not the first ones to do this," Whitcomb explained. "It's one way we can demonstrate to members of both co-ops that we do care about your dollar. We are actively trying to have an openness to new ideas that haven't been tried up in northwest Minnesota."

Under the new 50-50 cost share agreement, Whitcomb will split his time between the cooperatives, with some of this work overlapping for both. As a resident of rural Fertile, Minnesota, he'll have a nearly equal drive time to RRVCP headquarters in Halstad and Red Lake Electric headquarters in Red Lake Falls.

Having worked for RRVCP for 18 years (the last seven as CEO), Whitcomb is no stranger to his new team to the northeast. "I've known some of the employees of Red Lake Electric for years. I know they have great, incredibly competent employees who are doing an awful lot, and that work ethic has been reinforced over the short time I've been here," he said.

Writing the next chapter

Whitcomb, who grew up in West Fargo, North Dakota, started his career in journalism. After graduating from Moorhead State University with a degree in English and Communications, he was hired as a reporter for the Park River Enterprise. He then became an editor at a community newspaper, thriving in a space that allowed him to tell the stories of local rural people.

As much as Whitcomb enjoyed the rush of journalism, he knew he wanted to start a family and find more long-term career sta-

bility. He turned his attention to rural electric cooperatives, where he could continue to share stories and serve the communities around him. In 2005, he landed a job as a communications specialist at Wright-Hennepin Cooperative Electric Association near the Twin Cities. Three years later, an opening for a member services director at RRVCP brought him closer to home.

"During that time as a member services director, I started thinking about how I could continue to do this meaningful work and also advance within the co-op," he said. "About 10 years ago I started to think, you know, I could see myself leading here."

Under the mentorship of then-CEO Lauren Brorby, Whitcomb began to learn more about every aspect of co-op operations. He completed the Management Internship Program of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and was ready to step up when Brorby retired in 2019.

"When I became CEO, we pushed all our chips into technology," Whitcomb said. "I'd been a part of that push before I took leadership, so I think I gained some trust from the rest of the team who I'd been working beside to make it happen. That was the start of getting the technology we needed."

Beyond integrating new technologies like two-way Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) and transitioning to modern, highly efficient operations software from the National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC), Whitcomb worked hard to secure

state and federal funding to help with reliability projects across the RRVCP territory. The co-op will complete \$2.5 million worth of work over three years, converting more than 16 miles of overhead line to underground line. Approximately 75% will be reimbursed. "To be able to enhance reliability without the members having to foot 100% of the bill? I'm really proud of that," he said.

In his first few months as CEO of Red Lake Electric, Whitcomb plans to do a lot of listening. The knowledge of those 18 new employees will build upon the know-how of 19 RRVCP employees, doubling the size of their bench.

"The goal is to not make white caps," Whitcomb said. "The electrons have been flowing here for 90 years. Sometimes it's good just to get out of the way and let the people who know the system do their work."

A joint advisory committee composed of members from both co-op boards has been formed to help guide the early stages of the management alliance. The group will meet quarterly to assess what is working well and where refinements can be made.

Whitcomb is optimistic this next step in his journey will benefit both the co-ops and their members. And he counts that as a win for a man who just wanted to do meaningful work.

"It's a good feeling to work for a not-for-profit, because you do feel at the end of the day you're making difference," he said. "You're providing something that really helps people."

MINNKOTA COMPLETES HOBART LAKE TRANSMISSION PROJECT



This February, Minnkota crews wrapped up a major transmission structure replacement project near Valley City, North Dakota, which will protect the high-voltage power line from water hazards.

Three 69-kilovolt (kV) transmission poles crossing Hobart Lake near Interstate 94 had become inundated with water over time and needed to be changed out for better access and enhanced reliability. All were originally three-pole wood structures. Two were replaced with similar three-pole wood structures, moved to higher ground on either side of the lake. The other was

replaced with a new single-pole steel structure for lasting durability during rising lake levels.

In addition to the pole replacements, Minnkota raised the level of the peninsula around the new steel structure, which was originally constructed for maintenance access and to mitigate ice damage from the lake. Lineworkers also strung larger wire across the span and added bird diverters to help protect local wildlife. Crews will return to the site this spring to install final ground rods for the project once the ground thaws.

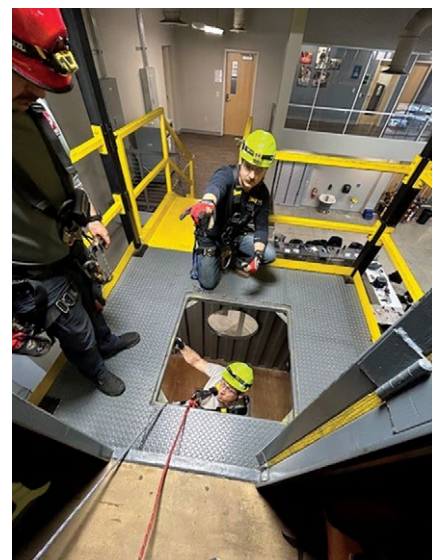
A large portion of the project cost was covered by state and federal funding, including a grant from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. This funding became available following severe flooding in the spring of 2023.



PLANT EMERGENCY RESCUE TEAM COMPLETES ROPES RESCUE TRAINING

When it comes to safety, Minnkota's employees continue to find ways to go above and beyond – literally. The Milton R. Young Station's Emergency Rescue Team (ERT) received some sky-high training March 24-25, attending a two-day, 20-hour rescue ropes refresher course offered at the North Dakota Safety Council (NDSC) building in Bismarck. The NDSC headquarters is specially equipped with a training space that simulates the confined spaces and high platforms that can be found in industrial settings, like a power plant.

Minnkota's ERT members completed training on patient packaging, high-angle ropes rescue, low-angle ropes rescue, confined space rescue, teambuilding skills and individual skills. The instructors work for ROCO Rescue out of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. ROCO is the same company that awarded Minnkota's team with the Real Rescue Award in 2023, following the successful ERT rope rescue of a contractor who had injured his leg at the top of tall scaffolding. Thank you to the Young Station team for always being ready to react in an emergency situation.



MINNKOTA, MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE DAY AT MN CAPITOL



Representatives from Minnkota's staff, member system board members and member employees met with lawmakers from their service areas to share perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing the energy sector. Conversations focused on maintaining grid reliability, managing costs for member-consumers and navigating evolving energy policies.

By participating in Electric Cooperative Day at the Minnesota State Capitol, Minnkota and its members reinforced the importance of strong partnerships between electric cooperatives and policymakers. The event provided a valuable opportunity to ensure that the voices of cooperative members are represented in legislative discussions that shape Minnesota's energy future.



Minnkota and its member cooperatives joined electric cooperatives from across the state at

the Minnesota Capitol in St. Paul for Electric Cooperative Day, an annual event focused on engaging policymakers and advocating for reliable, affordable energy.

Hosted by the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA), the event brought together electric cooperative leaders from across the state. Participants met directly with state legislators

to discuss key issues affecting the electric industry and the communities they serve.

ALTERNATE CO₂ CAPTURE TECHNOLOGY FOR PROJECT TUNDRA UNDER REVIEW

Project Tundra, an initiative to install carbon capture technology at the Milton R. Young Station, continues to move forward, with recent efforts focused on improving the project's overall viability.

Minnkota is evaluating an alternate carbon capture technology that could enhance both how the project is built and its overall economics. The goal is to ensure

Project Tundra is as practical, cost-effective and as reliable as possible.

The technology under evaluation uses a modular approach, allowing much of the equipment to be manufactured off-site and assembled at the Young Station. This could help reduce construction time, lower costs and simplify installation. There are other operational advantages that the project team

continues to assess. This work is still underway, and no final decisions have been made.

Detailed engineering and analysis will continue through 2026 to determine the best path forward. Project Tundra remains focused on finding a practical path to manage CO₂ emissions while continuing to provide reliable, resilient power.



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