



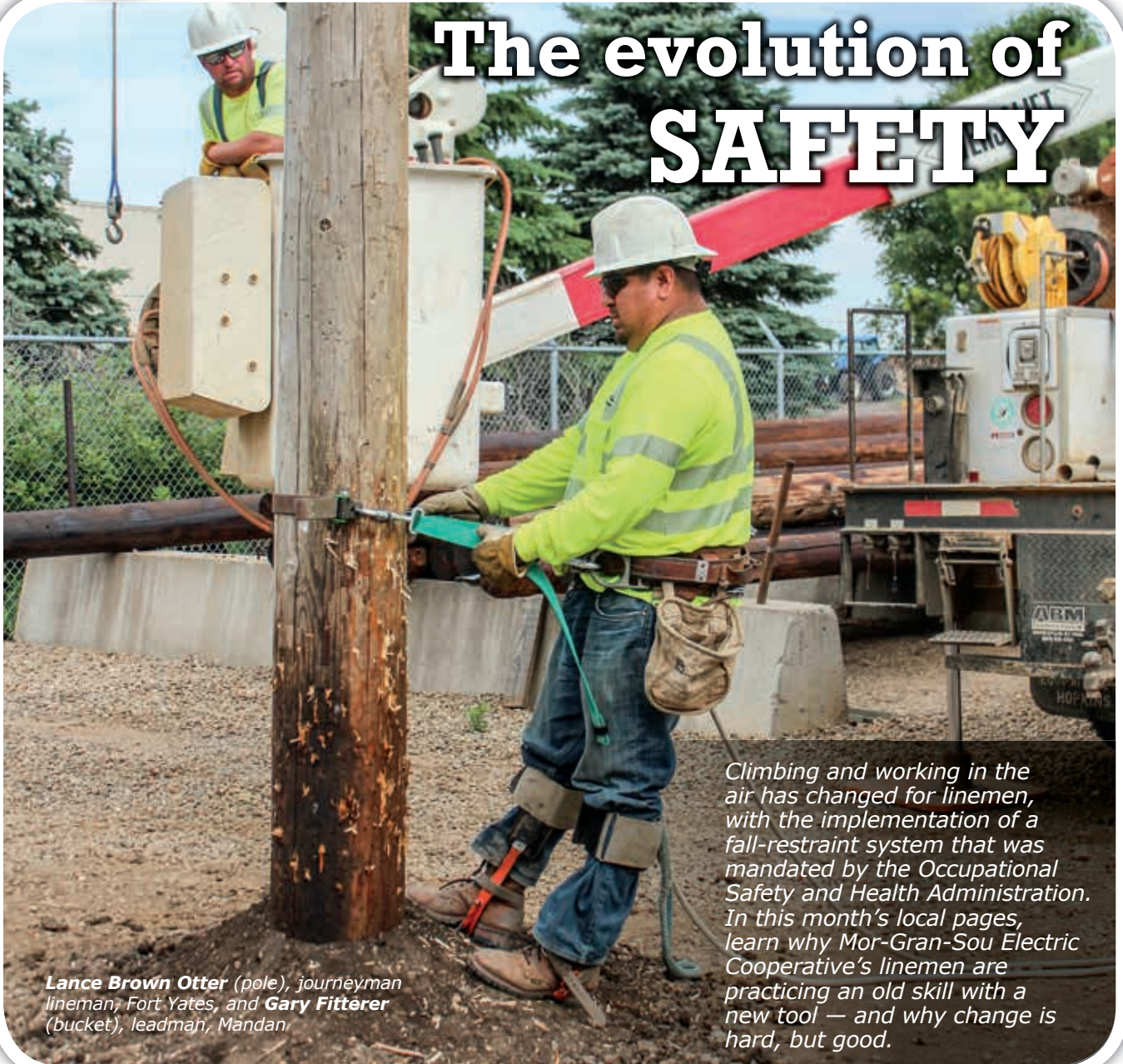
# CURRENT

Serving Morton, Grant and Sioux counties

OCTOBER 2015

NEWS

## The evolution of SAFETY



**Lance Brown Otter** (pole), journeyman lineman, Fort Yates, and **Gary Fitterer** (bucket), leadman, Mandan

*Climbing and working in the air has changed for linemen, with the implementation of a fall-restraint system that was mandated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. In this month's local pages, learn why Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative's linemen are practicing an old skill with a new tool — and why change is hard, but good.*

PHOTO BY CARMEN DEVNEY

### In this issue:

- **Change is hard but good**
- **Celebrate National Cooperative Day**
- **Baumgartner earns honor**
- **Youth Tour announcement**
- **Meeting minutes ... and more!**



When students sign up for the Bismarck State College lineworker program, one of the first things they learn how to do is climb. It can take weeks for students to get over their fear of heights and learn to climb a wooden pole. Some never do. Jason Smith, safety instructor for the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives, estimates about one-third of the students registered for the program drop out over their inability to climb.

## **CHANGE IS HARD, BUT GOOD** Linemen adapt to fall-restraint system

BY CARMEN DEVNEY



PHOTO BY CLARICE L. KESLER



A quick search on the Internet for linemen and climbing turns up story after story about accidents, injuries, and even loss of life. Working on energized, high-voltage power lines and climbing 35-foot distribution poles can be dangerous and deadly for linemen who do not follow the safety guidelines set forth by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, the occupation of lineman is among the most dangerous.

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative employs 10 linemen who take safety very seriously. They attend 10 mandatory safety trainings every year, provided by the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC). Some of the training topics include pole-top and bucket-truck rescue, defensive driving, OSHA updates, substation safety, chainsaw safety and tree felling, hazard recognition (slips, trips and falls), field observations for site-specific training, and CPR and AED training. Linemen can also attend hotline school, in which they review and practice procedures that involve working on and around energized, high-voltage power lines. The annual school is hosted by NDAREC.

Climbing accidents are not common — but they do happen. A lineman used to climb using only “gaffs” or hooks that are attached to each foot. If one of the spikes hit a crack or knot in the pole, the lineman could lose his balance and “cut out.” A positioning belt might have prevented him from falling far, if it was adjusted correctly and fastened securely to the pole. Without a belt, injury was a certainty.

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**“It used to be that when a lineman went to line school, he learned that if he started falling, he was supposed to push away from the pole so he didn’t hit anything on the way down. But you get 30 feet up on a pole, the first thing you’re going to do is grab the pole and give it a bear hug. It’s human instinct. There’s no way to fight it.”**

— Jason Smith, NDAREC safety instructor

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In the past, linemen weren’t required to use a belt for climbing — only for working at the top of the pole. They would free-climb using only their legs, hooks and hands. Once they reached the position they needed to string a new line or fix an outage, they would secure a single strap around the pole that was attached to their tool belt. This transferred the weight of the lineman from the outside of the pole to the inside, and allowed the lineman to work hands-free.

There was an art to using the strap. Jason Smith, safety



*Prior to June 2014, OSHA didn’t require linemen to wear a safety belt while climbing; they only had to wear one while working in the air. Here, former Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Lineman **Terry Kraft** (bottom) prepared to free-climb a pole.*

instructor with NDAREC, said it was specifically made to be worn a certain way. If used incorrectly or not at all, a lineman could “burn the pole” and fall to the ground. This would likely result in the lineman getting splinters if he grabbed the pole and tried to stop himself from falling.

“Just about everyone who has climbed at some point or another has burned a pole,” Smith reveals. “It used to be that when a lineman went to line school, he learned that if he started falling, he was supposed to push away from the pole so he didn’t hit anything on the way down. But you get 30 feet up on a pole, the first thing you’re going to do is grab the pole and give it a bear hug. It’s human instinct. There’s no way to fight it.”

OSHA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Labor, promotes the safety of all employees with its mission: To assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and



**“At the end of the day, I want to go home and see my family. [Climbing with the new belt] is a learning thing. It will take some time, but we’ll get it.”**

— Jason Jahner, Mor-Gran-Sou leadman

by providing training, outreach, education and assistance. OSHA has the task of monitoring and recording falls, which are the most common cause of serious work-related injuries and deaths.

In June 2014, OSHA changed its requirements to make climbing poles and steel towers safer for linemen, who are now required to wear a fall-restraint device that has an inner strap and outer strap. Any time they climb or work 4 feet or higher above ground, they are required to wear the restraint that would choke the pole in the event of a misstep. The equipment is designed to prevent a lineman from falling more than 2 feet.

Mor-Gran-Sou Journeyman Lineman Wayde Eckroth, a recent graduate of the Bismarck State College (BSC) lineworker program, learned how to free-climb in school. Even though he finished school in January, he says his education continues because the industry is always changing. While he’s had to relearn how to climb using the fall-restraint system, he has welcomed the change in the name of safety.

“It’s going to be good; just different. If it saves one person from a fall, it’s worth it,” he says.

Mor-Gran-Sou Leadman Jason Jahner says the transition seems to be harder for some of the more seasoned linemen. Jahner, who worked for FEM Electric Cooperative in Ipswich, S.D., for 8 years before moving to Mandan to work for Mor-Gran-Sou in 2007, says climbing with the belt has taken time and practice.

“It’s slow, but the more we climb with it, the better we get,” he describes.

“It’s a good deal,” he continues. “I appreciate my job and the safe work practices that are critical to being a lineman at Mor-Gran-Sou. When scheduled to work, I want to be doing just that – working – and not laid up because of an injury. At the end of the day, I want to go home and see my family. [Climbing with the new belt] is a learning thing. It will take some time, but we’ll get it.”

Smith says line schools including BSC are teaching climbing with the new fall-restraint system, and that apprentice linemen seem to have an advantage because it’s the only way they have learned how to climb. For seasoned linemen like Jahner, climbing and positioning a belt around electrical infrastructure may feel awkward at first.

“It’s different. It seems harder. That will change over time with practice,” Smith says.

While linemen don’t have to climb poles often, thanks



PHOTO BY CARMEN DENVEY

*Linemen wear personal protective gear to prevent accidents and injuries. A hard hat, safety glasses, leather gloves and OSHA-approved belt keep Mor-Gran-Sou leadman **Gary Fitterer** safe while performing this pole-top rescue.*

to bucket trucks with booms that lift a lineman to work in the air, there are times when a lineman must climb a pole. Rain and snow can make the ground too wet or muddy for a truck. Poles are also set among creeks, hills and trees, and the terrain can prevent the use of a bucket truck.

“By climbing rather than using a bucket truck, it doesn’t tear up a crop or somebody’s yard. It’s a courtesy for everyone,” Smith says.

Linemen may also choose to climb rather than use a bucket truck, to maintain their skills in the event of an outage or emergency.

The days of free-climbing are over. As safety and standards evolve, so must the linemen who build and maintain your cooperative’s electrical system.

“This change has been hard for some, but necessary to protect our linemen while on the job,” concludes Randy Ressler, manager of operations at Mor-Gran-Sou. “Climbing with the new system and adjusting belts as they go might take a little more time. But, accidents can happen anywhere. Thankfully a serious climbing accident hasn’t happened here. Since we started using the fall-restraint system, we can know without a doubt that our linemen will stay safe and return home to their families at night. That alone is worth the change.” ■



# MOR-GRAN-SOU ELECTRIC CELEBRATES NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH



October is National Cooperative Month, and Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative – and all co-ops across the United States – are celebrating the benefits and values that cooperatives bring to their members and communities.

While co-ops operate in many industries and sectors of the economy, seven cooperative principles set us apart from other businesses: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member's economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for community.

"Today, people prefer options and alternatives to 'big box' businesses," says Jackie Miller, chief of staff and manager of member services for Mor-Gran-Sou. "The co-op business model is unique and rooted in

our local communities. Co-ops help us build a more participatory, sustainable and resilient economy."

Mor-Gran-Sou is proud to be a part of more than 740 Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives in 47 states that deliver energy and energy solutions to millions of customers nationwide. Within North Dakota, Mor-Gran-Sou is one of 16 distribution cooperatives that serve 250,000 North Dakotans. With a presence in Flasher, Mandan and Fort Yates, Mor-Gran-Sou provides electric service to around 6,000 members.

To learn more about Mor-Gran-Sou, visit [www.morgransou.com](http://www.morgransou.com) or find us on Facebook. ■



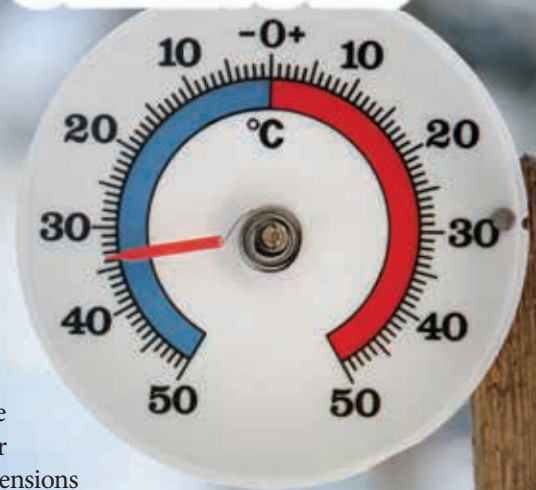
## COLD WEATHER CHARGES

One thing that's certain about North Dakota weather is the uncertainty of it, except for the fact that at some point during the winter, it probably will get cold. Our rates are designed around a number of different factors, one of them being an average cost of installing our service. Over the years, we've seen requests for electric service coming in later and later in the construction season and in many years, throughout the winter season. Both equipment maintenance and labor costs are significantly higher during winter weather conditions.

We're not opposed to obliging those requests, however, depending on frost and weather conditions we will assess an additional contribution in aid of construction charge of \$5 per line foot to help offset our increased costs for late-season, cold-weather work. This charge will be made on a case-by-case basis for line extensions requested and built after Nov. 1 and prior to April 1.

Recognizing that everyone is really busy throughout the year, please remember we need sufficient advance notice (two to four weeks) most any time to schedule installing your electric service or service change, but especially just prior to Nov. 1 because everyone is trying to beat the weather.

If you have questions please call Randy Ressler, manager of operations, at 701-597-3301, 701-663-0297 or 800-750-8212. ■





# ‘ALL THINGS POSSIBLE WITH HARD WORK AND DESIRE’ Baumgartner earns University of Mary honor

BY CARMEN DEVNEY

Choosing what college or university to attend is an important step for young adults who will use their education to better themselves, and ultimately develop the skills needed for a job and career. Chris Baumgartner, co-general manager and chief executive officer of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative, attended the University of Mary in Bismarck. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1995 in mass communications and public relations, with minors in English and business. He went back for his Master in Management degree in 2003 and completed a Master of Business Administration degree in 2009.

The University of Mary recently presented Baumgartner and two other former students with Outstanding Alumni awards. Baumgartner says the award recognizes alumni for modeling the Benedictine values of respect, hospitality, moderation, service, community and prayer.

“I don’t know who nominated me, but I know that I have much more that I can and should do in these areas,” he says. “I am very humbled to have received the award.”

Baumgartner initially chose to attend the University of Mary because of its impressive wrestling program. He says he grew to

appreciate what was a smaller school at the time, because of its good support and the attention of the instructors.

“It was a very supportive learning environment, and I think that culture grew out of the love of service demonstrated by the founding Sisters of Annunciation Monastery. Instructors went out of their way to help us grow in personal and professional ways,” he describes of the Catholic-based school.

As an undergrad, Baumgartner lived on campus for the first two years and developed many friendships. He was involved with the wrestling team, student government, yearbook, intramurals, work study, Wednesday morning Mass and more, and says there were countless opportunities to get involved.

During his time at the University of Mary, Baumgartner says he learned how to study — and that skill developed into a desire to continue learning and never stop.

“I began to look at academics in the way that I looked at sports programs; all things were possible with hard work and desire,” he says.

Baumgartner left the University’s wrestling program the beginning of his junior year to begin working at Basin Electric Power Cooperative as an intern in the communications and

government relations department.

“That gave me a taste of the cooperative world, and I have never looked back,” he says. “In fact, our cooperative model of service to our membership is very similar to the culture of service to others that is ever-present at the University of Mary.”

Reflecting on his time at the University and how it has molded him personally and professionally, Baumgartner says he is proud to have been a part of a University that focuses on whole-life education.

“I have been involved in various functions at the University over the years, and it has grown and evolved, but continues to stay true to its roots of service and Benedictine Values. In fact, I think there is a resurgence of these characteristics as they are being more fully articulated, and thus lived, throughout all aspects of the University,” he concludes.

Congratulations, Mr. Baumgartner, on your well-deserved award! ■



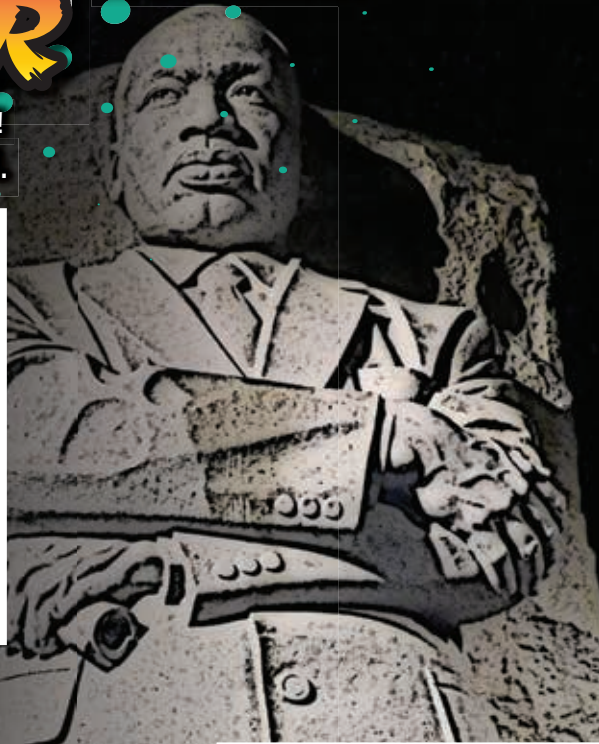


JUNE 11 to 17, 2016

North Dakota Electric Cooperative  
**YOUTH TOUR**

WRITE A WINNING ESSAY AND WIN A TRIP OF A LIFETIME!  
 An all-expense-paid trip to WASHINGTON, D.C.

HIGH SCHOOL  
 SOPHOMORES & JUNIORS



- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative.
- If you have questions, contact Jackie Miller, Mor-Gran-Sou Electric, at the address listed below, or call 701-597-3301 during regular business hours.
- The deadline is Jan. 29, 2016. Emailed entries should be directed to [jlmliller@morgransou.com](mailto:jlmliller@morgransou.com), and hard-copy entries mailed to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 297, Flasher, ND 58535-0297.

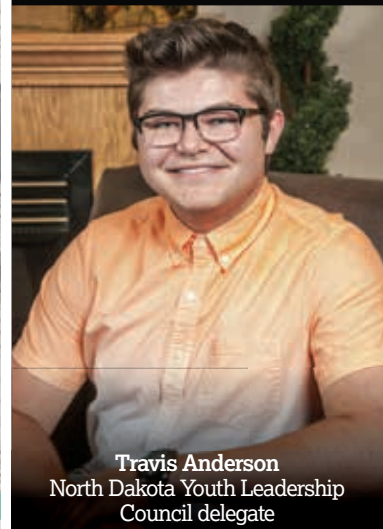
**ESSAY QUESTION:**

*“Pick one of the four Touchstone Energy® core values — innovation, integrity, accountability or commitment to community — and describe how you see this in action at Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative.”*

**TOP 3 REASONS TO ENTER THE ESSAY-WRITING CONTEST**

1. All-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., compliments of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative.
2. A whole week to visit unforgettable historic monuments, museums and the U.S. Capitol.
3. A learning experience you'll never forget.

Click the link below to find out why you should write an essay for the 2016 Youth Tour.  
[www.youtube.com/ndarec](http://www.youtube.com/ndarec)



Travis Anderson  
 North Dakota Youth Leadership Council delegate

CHECK OUT THE ESSAY-CONTEST GUIDELINES AT  
[www.ndyouthtour.com](http://www.ndyouthtour.com) and [www.youthtour.coop](http://www.youthtour.coop)

# MOR-GRAN-SOU ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## board meeting highlights



### Meeting date: Aug. 26, 2015

- Approved the July 17, 2015 regular Board meeting minutes
- Approved the July 17, 2015 Reorganization meeting minutes
- Reviewed the July 17, 2015 Annual Meeting minutes (for membership approval in 2016)
- Approved a work order inventory and a special equipment inventory
- Approved capital credits refunds to estates, and those age 80 and over
- Approved Basin Electric Power Cooperative Amendment to Wholesale Power Contract
- Discussed Basin Electric rates
- Approved Western Area Power Administration updated contracts
- Approved Innovative Energy Alliance (IEA), LLC 2016 Budget
- Approved four Amendments to 2012-2014 Work Plan
- Set the 2016 Mor-Gran-Sou Annual Meeting date and location
- Reviewed 2015 Mor-Gran-Sou Annual Meeting stats, costs, evaluations, etc.
- Accepted Board committee appointments for 2015-2016
- Assigned voting delegates/alternates for upcoming meetings
- RSVP'd for several upcoming meetings
- Moved the December Board meeting to Dec. 21, 2015
- Heard Co-General Managers/CEOs' update and reports from events attended
- Heard update on IEA, LLC
- Heard updates on all entities of WDUS Holdings, LLC
- Reviewed and discussed senior staff department updates
- Reviewed Mor-Gran-Sou safety meeting minutes
- Reviewed and accepted director's and attorney's financial report for June and July
- Heard director reports and held discussion on meetings attended
- Held Executive Session

#### Upcoming regular board meeting dates:

Oct. 28 at Prairie Learning Center, Raleigh, at 10:30 a.m. CT

Nov. 23 in the NDAREC board room, Mandan, at 10:30 a.m. CT

Members are welcome to attend board meetings at any time. Please contact Mor-Gran-Sou at ctermes@morgransou.com, or call 1-800-750-8212 or 597-3301 to confirm the meeting date and location if you wish to attend.

To place an item on the agenda, please contact Board Chair Leland "Judge" Barth or Co-General Manager/Chief Executive Officer Donald Franklund at least one week in advance.

Members may obtain a copy of approved Board minutes by completing and returning the "Request for Information or Data" form. You can find this form at [www.morgransou.com](http://www.morgransou.com), or contact the office for a copy.

## New requirements by credit card companies may affect you

BY JACKIE MILLER

Due to security breaches, credit card companies are requiring tighter security to protect personal information. The Payment Card Industry (PCI) has implemented new requirements for credit card payments that will impact the way Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative, Inc., accepts credit card payments. The Payment Card Industry Security Standards is an open global forum that develops, maintains and manages the PCI Security Standard, which include the Data Security Standard (DSS), Payment Application Data Security Standard (PA-DSS), Payment, and PIN Transaction Security (PTS) Requirements.

Due to the new requirements from credit card companies, beginning Oct. 1, 2015, Mor-Gran-Sou customer service representatives will no longer be able to verbally accept credit card payments by phone. So how will this affect you, the member-owner, when you do want to make a credit card payment? Credit card payments can still be made over the phone, but instead of talking to a customer service representative, you must utilize our Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system that is PCI compliant by calling 1-877-853-5865. We understand this is a change in how we have normally operated

and it may cause an inconvenience for some of our members. However, it is a change that is required to remain in compliance with PCI regulations and avoid very costly penalties and fines. Please know that this is just a small change in the cooperative payment options. Members may continue to pay by credit card, through SmartHub on their mobile device or through the "My Account" link on the home page of our website at [www.morgransou.com](http://www.morgransou.com).

Mor-Gran-Sou remains committed to you, the member-owner. That personal touch and exceptional customer service that you are accustomed to will not change. Mor-Gran-Sou personnel are still only a phone call away to answer your questions and concerns – including questions on your electric utility bill.

Also know that Mor-Gran-Sou will continue to accept payments by check, cash, money orders and, of course, credit cards. But, as discussed, to remain compliant with the payment card industry, member service representatives will no longer be able to verbally accept credit card payments by phone. If you do call the office wanting to make credit card payment, you can expect to be transferred to the IVR pay-by-phone payment option.

When calling 1-877-853-5865 to make a credit card payment you will be able to choose prompts to check your account status, make a payment, and update personal information affecting your account, such as a phone number, etc. Thank you for your understanding as we move forward with this payment option change. ■



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Toll-free: 800-750-8212 Fax: 701-597-3915

Email us: [info@morgransou.com](mailto:info@morgransou.com)

UNDERGROUND LINE LOCATES

800-795-0555 OR 811

#### OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Chair..... Leland "Judge" Barth  
 Vice Chair..... Casey Wells  
 Secretary-Treasurer..... Pam Geiger  
 Directors ..... Mark Doll,  
 Vernard Frederick, Lance Froelich,  
 Chad Harrison, Bob J. Leingang,  
 Bonnie Tomac

#### MANAGEMENT

Co-General Mgr./CEO..... Chris Baumgartner  
 Co-General Mgr./CEO.... Donald A. Franklund

[www.morgransou.com](http://www.morgransou.com)

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