

Bentz announced as co-general manager/CEO

BY ANNE HANSEN



Jason Bentz

Lineworkers in the energy industry learn early in their careers they will face various challenges on a regular basis. These challenging conditions prepared Jason Bentz for his new role as co-general manager/CEO of Slope Electric Cooperative.

In late 2022, the Slope Electric board of directors announced Bentz would be joining Travis Kupper in leading the cooperative, beginning in 2023.

"Jason is an experienced and proven leader. We, at Slope Electric, are confident he will be a great addition to the management team," says Slope Electric Board President Steve Wagner.

Serving the cooperatives

From a young age, Bentz recalls his interest in the electric service industry. His basic understanding of the profession came from a cousin who served as a cooperative lineworker for many years.

"I was always interested in being able to work with my hands while being outside. And since I wasn't afraid of heights, I thought I would pursue a career as a lineman," Bentz says.

He pursued his goals, and after receiving the required training from Bismarck State College, Bentz headed out of state to work for Thiel Construction in Nebraska and Oklahoma. During his first transmission job, Bentz remembers feeling validated in his career choice.

"When I was on my first transmission project in Nebraska, I was working on a 230-kilovolt and asked to go



Jason Bentz started his career as a lineworker.

Slope Electric Cooperative Inc.

OUTLOOK

116 E. 12th St. • New England, ND 58647 | 701-579-4191 • www.slopeelectric.coop

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unclip wires in preparation for new wires to be pulled in. While on a 90-foot pole, which was situated on top of a 300-foot plateau, I thought, 'Yes, I made the right choice,' as the view was spectacular," he says.

Although Bentz enjoyed working for Thiel Construction, his goal was always to return to his home state of North Dakota. That goal was made a reality when he received a job offer from Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative in Flasher as an apprentice lineworker.

"I remember my first job at Mor-Gran-Sou Electric was changing out a transformer at a pasture well tap west of Elgin with Foreman Mark Hoffman," he says.

Growing into a cooperative leader

For the next several years, Bentz continued to work his way up in the cooperatives, rising from apprentice to journeyman lineworker and foreman.

"I have always wanted to take opportunities and grow with them and try my best to serve others, and give others the opportunities to grow as well," he says.

For 20 years, Bentz did just that at Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative, before transitioning to operations manager and chief of staff at Roughrider Electric Cooperative in Dickinson, beginning in 2013.

Although Bentz recognizes being a lineworker is not a glamorous or easy profession, the skills learned, including commitment to safety, understanding shortcuts are not an option and a dedication and sense of service, have prepared him for his new role.

This also includes his understanding of working as a team.

"In life, and in a career in the energy industry, you cannot be very successful without a good team," Bentz says, noting his good fortune of working alongside influential teams and leaders throughout his career, which helped shaped him into the person he is today.

"I have always had good role models and mentors, starting with my parents, who taught

me to work hard, to do a job well and to never pretend to know the answers if you don't," Bentz says. "In addition to my parents, the leaders out in the field have taught me to not be afraid to ask questions, and most importantly, always listen to understand."

Bentz looks forward to his new role, and using the skills he has gained along the way to continue moving the cooperative in the right direction, while working alongside Kupper.

"I will try and make the plans a reality to help our member-cooperatives succeed in an ever-changing industry. We need to be mindful of the members and keep providing reliable, affordable power, and keep looking at new technologies," Bentz says. ■



Jason Bentz served as a lineworker for Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative early in his career.

Manager's message: Giving back to our community



Travis Kupper

Over the past year, you've probably heard or read about Slope Electric Cooperative's concern for our community. This is one of the core principles that sets cooperatives apart from other types of utilities and businesses. We've always taken this mission and responsibility to heart. It's who we are as a co-op.

Now, with the holidays behind us, it has made

me pause and reflect on the role we play in our rural area. While our purpose is to provide safe and reliable energy to you, the members we serve, we have a greater mission – to be a catalyst for good.

You're probably aware of our Operation Round Up program, in which we take donations from generous members like you who have "rounded up" the amount due on their electric bill to the nearest dollar to donate to local charities. Or our Youth Tour program, in which we take our community's brightest young people to Washington, D.C., for

a weeklong immersion to experience democracy in action.

You'll also see our employees serving on local boards, coaching youth sports and volunteering at charitable events. Because when you work at a co-op, you understand how important a strong community is. After all, without you, the co-op wouldn't exist.

We know our core job is to keep the lights on, but our passion is our rural areas, and we want to make them a better place for all.

If there's anything we can do to help you, whether providing energy-saving advice to help lower your monthly bill or discussing payment plan options during these difficult times, please reach out to us at 701-579-4191 or 800-559-4191.

Concern for community is the heart and soul of who we are. And no matter what the future brings, you can count on your electric co-op to care about you. ■

Prepare for tax season with SmartHub

Print copies of your monthly utility bills for your tax records by logging into SmartHub! Visit www.slopeelectric.coop and click "SmartHub" to proceed to your billing history. If you have not signed up for SmartHub, you can set up a new, secure account. ■

Tax Season



Slope Electric supports students with scholarships

Slope Electric takes pride in assisting with the development of rural leadership through our scholarship program.

We are happy to continue our scholarship program and offer scholarships to qualifying seniors, who must be dependents of Slope Electric members.



Download applications at www.slopeelectric.com

Complete applications and send to: comments@slopeelectric.coop or by mailing to:

Slope Electric Cooperative
Attn: Scholarship Committee
116 E. 12th St. | P.O. Box 338
New England, ND 58647

Return completed application before Jan. 31, 2023.

\$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship

Slope Electric will award a \$1,000 scholarship sponsored by Basin Electric. The scholarship will be awarded to a high school senior or college freshman already enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time graduate or undergraduate program, and who are dependents of a Slope Electric member. The student must attend an accredited two- or four-year program, university or vocational/tech school. A completed application is required.

Area high school scholarship

Slope Electric will award six \$500 scholarships to seniors who are dependents of a Slope Electric member. One graduating senior will be selected from each school in Slope's service area: Bowman, Hettinger, Lemmon, Mott-Regent, New England and Scranton. Students should

contact the school counselor for requirements.

Luck-of-the-draw scholarship

Slope Electric will award two \$500 luck-of-the-draw scholarships at the annual meeting. All area high school students who are dependents of a Slope Electric member are eligible. Students must attend Slope's annual meeting, accompanied by at least one parent or guardian. No application is required.

Lineworker scholarship from 3C Construction

Slope Electric will award a \$500 scholarship sponsored by 3C Construction. Eligible students are high school seniors who are enrolled in a certified vocational or technical school pursuing a career as a lineworker and who are dependents of a Slope Electric member. A completed application is required.

Mechanic scholarship from West Dakota Utility Services

Slope Electric will award a \$500 scholarship sponsored by WDUS. Eligible students are high school seniors who are enrolled or planning to enroll in a certified vocational or technical school pursuing a career as a mechanic, and who are dependents of a Slope Electric member. A completed application is required.

Applications can be filled out online and emailed to comments@slopeelectric.coop, or printed and mailed to: Slope Electric Cooperative, Inc. Attn: Scholarship Committee, 116 East 12th St P.O. Box 338 New England, ND 58647.



Planning to build or upgrade?

Whether you are looking to build a new structure or make changes to an existing structure, it is important to contact Slope Electric Cooperative in the early planning stages.

“Each year, we help our members with their construction upgrades and new builds,” said Dean Volk, operations manager at Slope Electric Cooperative.

“Projects can range from pasture wells to grain storage, new outbuildings, houses and businesses,” Volk said. “For projects of all sizes, it is important to contact your local cooperative.”

By doing so, you will be able to confirm the viability of your project.

“Our engineering department can verify whether we can serve additional load in your area and the availability and cost of equipment and materials,” Volk said.

Information you will need to share with the cooperative includes the type of upgrade or new build, location, timeline and power requirements.

“If you are unsure of this information, work with an electrician that can contact us,” Volk said.

This year, it is especially important due to the global supply chain disruptions, Volk said.

“We want to ensure your building project or upgrade goes as smoothly as possible, and that is why it is important to call us in the early stages,” he said. ■

Be efficient with new builds

Are you planning to build a new structure on your property? Follow these tips to achieve energy efficiency:

- **Location matters.** If possible, carefully consider where you build your shop or barn. Consider drainage, sun exposure and how the building may affect your neighbors.
- **Start with a sustainable design plan.** A sustainable design plan, according to the U.S. General Services Administration, includes the ability to use environmentally preferable products; protect and conserve water; enhance indoor environmental quality; and optimize operational and maintenance practices.
- **Choose efficient building methods.** Pole barns offer reliable shelter without costly excavation, concrete foundations or general site disruption. ■

Upgrading existing structure

Follow these tips to make energy-efficient upgrades to an existing structure:

- Replace indoor lighting with energy-efficient LED bulbs.
- Ensure your existing structure has adequate insulation levels.
- Choose outdoor lighting designed to be energy efficient, and install motion detectors to reduce energy consumption when not in use.
- Plant trees around your metal shed or barn. In colder climates, trees act as a windbreak, and in warmer climates, trees have a natural cooling effect that can reduce temperatures in your metal building 3 to 6 degrees.
- Consider adding a ceiling fan to circulate air. Typically, there is a 2-degree temperature increase for every 1-foot increase in ceiling height. A ceiling fan can help keep warm air close to the ground in the winter, and circulate fresher, cooler air in the summer. Not only will this help with energy costs, it will also help keep the air in the building from becoming hot and stagnant, which will keep harmful bacteria from building and insects at bay. ■

Safety Starts with ME: Dean Volk

“At Slope Electric, we do our best to maintain our system to ensure readiness for all types of severe weather and to reduce the number of outages, but Mother Nature can be unpredictable,” said Dean Volk, operations manager/chief of staff at Slope Electric Cooperative.

That being said, outages are inevitable. Here at Slope Electric, our line crew takes necessary safety precautions when restoring power for you, our members.

However, our line crew’s safety remains in your hands. When using portable generators in the event of a downed power line, this can prove to be dangerous and, in some cases, fatal to our lineworkers when used incorrectly.

A generator plugged into a home’s wiring or regular household outlet can cause backfeeding along power lines and electrocute anyone that comes into contact with them, even if the line seems deenergized.

Not only does this cause danger for our lineworkers, but also for our members. If a generator is used improperly, generator owners may also be at risk of electrocution, fire injury, property damage or carbon monoxide poisoning.

Here are some tips to ensure you are using a generator correctly:

1. Never connect a generator directly to your home’s wiring, unless your home has been wired for generator use.
2. Always plug appliances directly into generators.
3. Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords.
4. Ensure your generator is properly grounded.
5. Never overload a generator.
6. Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting it down.
7. Keep the generator dry. Operate it on a dry surface under an open structure.
8. Always have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby.



9. Never refuel a generator while it is operating.
10. Read and adhere to the manufacturer’s instructions for safe operation.

We encourage you to protect the well-being and safety of your family as well as those that assist in bringing power to you, our members. Contact Slope Electric for more information regarding generator hookups. ■

Slope Electric makes saving money easy!

Slope Electric is now making it even easier to save on your electric bill! All members who receive paperless statements only will receive a \$1 credit for each month enrolled. In addition, members who sign up for an automatic withdrawal through their bank account will also receive a \$1 credit for each month enrolled. The savings will show up once a year on your bill.

To learn more about the benefits of SmartHub, visit slopeelectric.coop/ways-pay.



TWO ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIPS TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

ESSAY QUESTION:

If chosen as a Youth Tour delegate, you will be traveling to Washington, D.C., to experience and learn about America's rich history. What moment in American history do you wish you had been a part of and what would you have contributed?

TOP 3 REASONS

1. Two all-expense-paid trips to Washington, D.C., compliments of Slope 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

JUNE 18-23, 2023



- 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 Slope Electric Cooperative.
- If you have any questions, please contact Brooke Waltner, Slope Electric, at 701-579-2252 during regular business hours.
- The deadline is Jan. 20, 2023. You can email entries to Brooke Waltner at bwaltner@slopeelectric.coop or mail a hard copy to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, 116 E. 12th St., P.O. Box 338, New England, ND 58647-0338.



CHECK OUT THE ESSAY CONTEST GUIDELINES AT
<https://ndyouthtour.com>

Opening the archives

Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and Rural Electrification Act (REA) of 1936 changed the course of history in rural America. The REA established distribution cooperatives across the nation and brought electricity, and prosperity, to the most remote areas of the country, including Slope Electric Cooperative.

We were founded when neighbors worked together to bring electricity to our rural and underserved areas. The members who came together to bring electricity to our area were – and still are today – conveners for the common good. Join Slope Electric in 2023, as we open the archives and learn more about the history of our territory, view photos from the past and discover how far we have come!

Like and follow us on Facebook and Instagram to learn more! ■

Statement of nondiscrimination

Slope Electric Cooperative is a recipient of federal assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In accordance with federal civil rights law and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible agency or USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD3027, found online at www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form.

To request a copy of the complaint form, call 866-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: 1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410; 2) fax: 2026907442; or 3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. Slope Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider.

Report from THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Regular meeting held via conference call.

- Approved agenda
- Approved minutes from previous meeting on Oct. 27
- Heard co-general managers/CEOs update
- Heard WDUS/3C update
- Heard Basin Electric Cooperative updates
- Heard CFO report
- Heard operations report
- Heard member relations summary
- Heard the attorney report
- Approved budget
- Reviewed board member reports



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Fax: 701-579-4193

Email us:

comments@slopeelectric.coop

UNDERGROUND LINE LOCATES

800-795-0555 or 811

SLOPE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Steven Wegner, President
Anthony Larson, Vice President
Angela Carlson, Secretary
Henry "Chip" Fischer, Treasurer
Lauren Klewin, Director
Jerome Caron, Director
Dale Hande, Director
Charlotte Meier, Director

MANAGEMENT

Jason Bentz
CO-GM/CEO

Travis Kupper
CO-GM/CEO

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