

# On The Rise? New Projects Mean Higher Rates For NSP's Electricity Customers

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE – Changes in federal regulations during recent years continue to push up electricity prices. Another example came Monday when the state Public Utilities Commission approved rate increases for Northern States Power in South Dakota.

The commission voted to accept a settlement between NSP and commission staff for a basic 4 percent rate increase in 2015 and a guarantee the rates won't go up before 2018.

The deal however also includes an infrastructure rider that would add about 5 percent more starting in 2016 to pay for a page-long list of projects. The commission would review the rider annually.

The rider is calculated to generate about \$9.3 million in 2016 and nearly \$10.8 million in 2017.

The three most-expensive projects on the rider list for 2016 are about \$1.8 million to pay for some of the cost overruns for an upgrade at NSP's Monticello nuclear plant; about \$2.1 million toward a wind farm at Rolette, N.D.; and nearly \$2.7 million toward a

wind farm in Mower and Dodge counties in southeastern Minnesota.

Those amounts would all decrease somewhat in 2017, while costs for other infrastructure work would go up in some cases and down in others.

The company remains in a legal battle in Minnesota over how much of the cost for the nuclear project can be shifted to customers there.

The cost overruns totaled about \$330 million, according to Chris Nelson, chairman for the South Dakota commission.

The company isn't seeking to turn

a profit on the money invested in the overruns, Nelson said. "On behalf of our ratepayers I'm willing to take the deal today to get that issue settled and off the table," he said.

Xcel Energy serves 84,561 electricity customers in South Dakota. Other states served by the corporation include North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas.

The three South Dakota commissioners said their staff worked hard to get NSP's increase down for 2015 to approximately half of the original request.

"I very much appreciate the amount of give and take that took place. This is a very fair settlement," commissioner Gary Hanson said.

Commissioner Kristie Fiegen said the staff members were "laser focused" in denying or reducing the allowable costs for items such as marketing, property taxes, incentives and aviation.

Plant upgrades and federal requirements are the majority of costs facing ratepayers, she said.

## ACLU Files Federal Suit Challenging Law

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — The American Civil Liberties Union has filed a federal lawsuit challenging a South Dakota law that moved the deadline for new political parties seeking a spot on the 2016 ballot.

The ACLU filed the lawsuit on behalf of the Libertarian Party on Monday. The law challenged by the lawsuit is part of a new bundle of changes that opponents say would discourage candidates from running for office.

The law being questioned shifted the deadline for new parties to submit declarations to participate in primary elections backward by four weeks. The plaintiffs are asking the deadline be set for no earlier than March 29 for a party that wants to participate in a primary election.

The lawsuit names Secretary of State Shantel Krebs as a defendant. She wasn't immediately available to comment.

## Man Pleads Guilty In Fatal Car Crash

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A Lincoln man has pleaded guilty to manslaughter in connection with a fatal car crash last year.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports 19-year-old Cristofer Cazun entered guilty pleas to two manslaughter charges Monday.

Cazun was driving a vehicle last September when he rear-ended a pickup. A passenger in the second vehicle, 50-year-old Randall Woita, died at the scene. Two others in that car were also injured.

Authorities say Cazun was high on synthetic marijuana at the time and was speeding prior to the crash.

Cazun is scheduled to be sentenced on Sept. 3.

## Police: 18-Year-Old Injured In Shooting

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Authorities in Omaha say an 18-year-old was brought to a local hospital with injuries from a shooting.

The Omaha Police Department says the 18-year-old was brought to the hospital Sunday afternoon. He is in stable condition, though additional information about his condition is not available.

The 18-year-old told police he was involved in an altercation with two other men when he was shot. The case remains under investigation.

## Girls' Lemonade Stand Raises \$3.5K

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Around \$3,500 was raised this weekend for veterans with the help of two Omaha girls operating a lemonade stand.

Jadyn Horst, 10, and her 6-year-old sister Kalyn wanted to help support veterans to honor a former kindergarten teacher who died after serving in Iraq, the *Omaha World-Herald* reported.

The money from the sisters' lemonade stand and sales by food vendors at the Sunday fundraiser went toward the Wounded Warriors Family Support and Moving Veterans Forward organizations.

"I look at those two little girls and I think, 'This is awesome,'" said Wendy Tatro of Wounded Warriors Family Support. "It shows a lot about their characters and their upbringing."

Tatro said helping injured veterans takes many forms. More than 400 families benefit from a program that helps caregivers of veterans.

"Right now we have two women with children at St. Jude's Hospital in Memphis," Tatro said. "While they're away, we help care for the veteran and any other family members. We do whatever is needed, from cleaning house to running errands."

Founder Ron Hernandez of Moving Veterans Forward said his organization works with homeless veterans in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa. He helps round up necessary household items for whenever a home has been found for a veteran.

"What these two young ladies are doing is great," he said. "They're finding a passion for taking care of our vets, and that's important, because vets step up to take care of the citizens of the United States, not just in war but in times of natural disasters."

## Free Meals Available To Youth In SD

PIERRE (AP) — Organizations across South Dakota are serving free meals to children and adolescents this summer as part of a federal program.

Individuals age 18 and younger can get a free meal at participating locations, which include nonprofits, schools, libraries and local governments.

The Summer Food Service Program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Individuals can find facilities serving meals by using an online tool.

The state's Department of Education says about 61,000 South Dakota students receive free or reduced-price meals when school is in session. The summer food program is meant to provide meals when school is not in session.

Education officials say nearly 429,000 meals were served last year through the summer food program.

## Man Arrested For Cold Case In Court

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A Florida man arrested on a first-degree murder charge in April in connection with a slaying more than 25 years ago in South Dakota will make his first court appearance this week.

The sheriff's office in Minnehaha County says the initial court appearance of Kim Leroy Aune, of Lee County, Florida, has been scheduled for Tuesday.

Authorities accuse Aune of shooting his girlfriend, Kimberly Eidsness, on Nov. 13, 1989, at their home east of Sioux Falls.

Aune was indicted in April in South Dakota and arrested in Florida. He was 57 years old at the time of his arrest.

Aune is in custody at the Minnehaha County Jail. It was not immediately clear if he has an attorney.

## 1 Injured Following Reports Of Shooting

FREMONT, Neb. (AP) — Authorities in Fremont say one person has been injured following reports of a shooting.

The Fremont Police Department says it received a report of a shooting Monday afternoon. Authorities say some type of altercation may be connected to the reports.

One person was taken by private car to a local hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. Authorities say it's unclear how the person was hurt. The reported shooting remains under investigation.



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