

## Regional Roundup Divide at Odds with PSC

The North Dakota Public Service Commission on May 14 approved Basin Electric Power Cooperative's permits for two new transmission lines in Divide and Williams counties, though Divide officials are still withholding other permits.

The PSC praised Basin Electric on what it described as a thorough application and said the cost for the new lines, from two existing substations to the Canadian border, will be paid for by Saskatchewan energy provider SaskPower.

The comments were less praiseworthy for Basin the next day at the Divide County Planning and Zoning Commission meeting.

That board has tabled for the second time two conditional-use permits for the projects and said they will not be forthcoming without approval from Hawkeye and Blooming Valley townships.

--The Journal, Crosby

## Bison Station Breaks Ground

Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Bison Generation Station, now under construction near Ray, is being hailed as a landmark project for both the state and country's energy future.

When completed, Bison will be the largest electric generating facility in the state and the flagship of Basin's natural gas fleet, co-op leaders said at a groundbreaking ceremony May 11. At an estimated cost of \$4 billion, the plant is also the single largest generation investment in Basin Electric's 65-year history.

"North Dakota's demand for electricity has grown faster than any other state over the last 10 years," CEO Todd Brickhouse said.

The natural gas-fired station is expected to produce nearly 1,500 megawatts of electricity, with two units of roughly 745 megawatts each.

--Western Dakota Energy Association

## Williston Schools Still Surging

Enrollment in the Williston Basin School District is projected to continue its steep rise, and the district needs to be prepared for this, according to a presentation by a consulting firm.

In a 76-slide presentation to the school board, RSP & Associates CEO Rob Schwartz provided extensive information and analysis regarding the school district's student population.

"We need capacity in many different places," Schwartz said during the May 11 meeting.

RSP projects enrollment will increase from 5,623 students in 2026 to 6,171 students by 2031. If the projection is correct, the district will need to accommodate 548 more students, more than are enrolled in any single grade level in 2026.

Schwartz said this increase in enrollment is expected to hit elementary schools first.

--Williston Herald

## Minot Freezes Some Hiring

A temporary hiring freeze for some vacancies is in place as the city of Minot seeks to position itself for a tough budget cycle.

City Manager Tom Joyce told the Minot City Council on May 18, that five vacant positions that draw on general fund spending are not being filled currently. They include an assistant city manager, public information officer, financial clerk, mechanic and engineering technician.

Joyce said he has been approving hiring for the police and fire departments and dispatch.

City departments have been asked to trim their 2027 budget requests by 3% from 2026. The tentative budget includes a 4% cumulative salary increase and estimated 7% increase for benefits.

Joyce said he also is looking at whether certain employee positions need to be full time.

--Minot Daily News

# Addressing Male Suicide Takes Individual, Community Engagement

## Rural Men, Farmers and Veterans at Highest Risk

By Michael Standaert  
ND News Cooperative

It's the simple phrases not often said that make a huge difference.

Are you doing okay? I'm here if you need to vent. How can I help? I know you're going through a rough patch.

Melissa Markegard, North Dakota Health and Human Services suicide prevention administrator, said an important piece of suicide prevention is having the conversations that may look hard or uncomfortable from the outside, but don't necessarily have to be.

"This is a conversation to say hey, I see you, I see that there's a lot going on in your life right now. We all know it, let me know if you need something," Markegard said.

Shoot a text. Grab a coffee. Get dinner. Just getting together with someone going through a hard time might make a big difference, she said.

"I think suicide prevention is all of us, as community members and human beings, paying attention to what's happening to one another," Markegard said.

Currently, that's not happening enough, particularly when it comes to working-age men who may be struggling across the state.

## High risk

Nationwide, farmers have a rate of suicide 3.5 times higher and veterans have a 58% higher risk than the general population.

In North Dakota, the number hovers around 10-15 farmer suicides per year, according to Markegard. Data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs shows an average of 20 veteran suicides annually in the state.

Around 80% of suicides in North Dakota are men, with some of the highest rates compared to overall population in rural counties. In 2023, veterans accounted for a little over 13% of the 146 suicides in the state.

Preliminary data shows a slight uptick in the next two years, with 148 suicide deaths in 2024 and 162 in 2025.

Over the past 20 years, North Dakota had a 57% increase in suicide rates, which was the highest increase in the nation.

Men struggling with hopelessness, depression, anxiety, addiction or other mental health challenges are less likely to call hotlines or seek help through therapy.

According to a new study from Crisis Text Line, a nonprofit working with the national 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, analyzing 1.5 million text messages to the hotline found that only 20% identified as male.

Markegard notes that all calls and texts to the 988 line in North Dakota are routed to counselors based in the state who may have a better understanding of the local situation, and would only go out of state if they are occupied with other clients.

## High stress

Bridgette Readel of agriculture consulting service Ag Mafia, who lives in Hunter, ND, said a rash of six suicides in the region late last summer into early fall shows the high stress many farmers are under at the moment.

High input costs, the uncertainties related to trade and global supply chains, and lower commodity prices add up along with things like family dynamics, a sense of isolation, and communities where farms are larger but towns are not.

Readel said that more openness and a willingness to talk can work, and that one-on-one conversations with trusted, discreet sources is most successful.

"I have a couple of farmer friends who have struggled, either themselves, with addiction or depression or anxiety, or in their families, and they're willing to talk one-on-one with others," Readel said.

Readel said it is important for residents in smaller towns and rural areas to take training like Question-Persuade-Refer or QPR, offered by groups like NDSU Extension, or a mental health first aid course to increase the ability for those seeking help to have discreet one-on-one discussions.

Adriana Drusini, program coordinator for Farm and Ranch Stress at NDSU, said the ideal candidates for QPR training are spouses of farmers.

"That's the person they have close and they can trust," Drusini said. "So, if the wives attend the trainings or somebody in the immediate family, they are going to be equipped with the skills to ask the questions, to figure out what's going on and to help people before they put that suicidal idea in their minds."

## Successful interventions

Markegard said she's seen success in some of the couples' retreat programs for farmers in several locations across the state.

"It's really fantastic for building connections because we've found farmers, or rural guys,



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don't like to talk about all this, even with their wives," Markegard said. "The couples' retreats really get them communicating, and communicating appropriately, and it's not just them but they're with other couples who have the same types of experiences."

Locally, the North Dakota HHS is currently rolling out more suicide prevention support and training for rural healthcare providers, with a \$400,000 grant from the Rural Health Transformation Program that it hopes can make more inroads.

While the award has not yet been granted, the organization selected will work with rural and tribal healthcare providers to coordinate training, technical assistance and standardize screening.

This will include more routine screenings by clinical healthcare providers, strengthening referral protocols and standardizing follow-up procedures following attempted suicides.

Additionally, NDSU Extension will have a free suicide prevention webinar on May 28 for those interested in learning more. Registration is available at [ndsu.ag/QPR-May-2026](http://ndsu.ag/QPR-May-2026) or by contacting Drusini at [adriana.drusini@ndsu.edu](mailto:adriana.drusini@ndsu.edu) or Sean Brotherson at [sean.brotherson@ndsu.edu](mailto:sean.brotherson@ndsu.edu)

**Editor's note: If you or someone you know is struggling with thoughts of self-harm or suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988 or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741.**

The North Dakota News Cooperative is a non-profit news organization providing reliable and independent reporting on issues and events that impact the lives of North Dakotans. The organization increases the public's access to quality journalism and advances news literacy across the state. For more information about NDNC or to make a charitable contribution, please visit [newscoopnd.org](http://newscoopnd.org).

## It Happened To...

Minot State University awarded 615 degrees — including 513 undergraduate and 102 graduate — as the University's Class of 2026.

Graduating from the area were **Kristen Rae Boger**, Bachelor of Science in Education, Special Education, **Haley Paige France**, Bachelor of Science, Radiologic Technology and **Sierra Rivers Nordloef**, Master of Science, Speech Language-Pathology of Kenmare; **Grace Edwards**, Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, **Madison Elizabeth Fraunfelter**, Master of Science, Speech Language-Pathology, **Noah Lucas Fredrickson**, Bachelor of Arts, Professional Communication, **Kyle John Van Berkom**, Bachelor of Science in Education, Health and Physical Education, all of Powers Lake.

## Bible Study at Mouse River Park Chapel Starting June 1

Have you ever wondered what it was like to walk alongside Jesus? To sit around the campfire with the disciples? To feel the tension of the Roman occupation?

You are invited to experience the words in the New Testament at a Bible Study at the Mouse River Park Chapel starting June 1 at 7:00 p.m. This Bible Study centered on "The Chosen" series will be held every other Monday evening.

Each week the group will watch an episode together, consider the historical and cultural context, dive into the Bible to see what God's word says, and follow up with open discussion and questioning. All materials will be provided and all are welcome.

## Movie Review Star Wars: Mandalorian & Grogu

Once a lone bounty hunter, Mandalorian Din Djarin and his apprentice Grogu embark on an exciting new Star Wars adventure.

This action/adventure, family, fantasy sci-fi film is rated PG-13 for sci-fi violence and action. The film is 2 hours and 12 minutes.

Star Wars: Mandalorian & Grogu is playing at the Kenmare Theatre May 29-31. Show times are Friday, Saturday and Sunday having ONE show only at 7:00 p.m.

## Coming Events

### EVENTS

**Baby Girl Shower for Melanie (Marden) McQuillin:** Saturday, June 13, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Fit for Life Fitness Center in Powers Lake. Registered at The Country Store and Northern Charm Boutiques in Powers Lake and Amazon Baby Registry (search for Melanie Marden, July 2026).

### MEETINGS

**Crimson Cruiser Red Hats:** Tuesday, June 2, 11:00 a.m. at Prairie Bistro, Mohall.

**Bowbells Park District:** Thursday, June 11, 4:30 p.m., Bowbells City Park.

**Kleppen Family Gathering:** Sunday, June 3, Faith Lutheran Church, Columbus. Worship at 11:00 a.m., potluck meal about 1:00 p.m. Everyone welcome. Come meet your relatives and friends.

### SERVICES

**Powers Lake Food Pantry:** open third Tuesday of the month, 1:00-3:00 p.m., basement of Legion Hall, 201 1st Ave. W.

**Bowbells Public Library** open Tuesdays, 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

**Society of St. Stephen Food Pantry:** open Tuesday, June 9, 2:00-4:00 p.m., 10 Washington Ave, Bowbells.

**Children's Clothing Pantry:** open Tuesday, June 9, 2:00-4:00 p.m. Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Bowbells.

## SUDOKU

6			4		8			
	5					3		
4		2						5
								6
		9			4			
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3								9 8
				3	5	2		

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Level: Intermediate

### Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

1	7	2	5	3	7	6	8	9
8	6	9	2	4	1	5	7	3
3	7	5	6	8	9	4	2	1
5	2	4	7	9	3	6	1	8
6	8	4	1	4	1	3	6	9
9	2	7	1	6	5	3	4	8
4	4	8	5	1	3	2	6	7
7								
4								
1	5	8	2	2	8	2	1	5
6	3	6	7	3	3	6	7	4
9	1	9	1	8	5	8	9	1

ANSWER:

VOTE KURT KOPPELSLOEN  
Burke County Commissioner District 2  
I would appreciate your vote on June 9.

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