

Co-ops Score Touchdown with Super Bowl Viewers

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota scored a great impact on viewers, as part of a Super Bowl television/Internet promotion.



Nearly 10,000 viewers registered to participate in an online TV commercial trivia contest, which included Touchstone Energy spots.

The Sweet TV Super Bowl Sweepstakes was a high-scoring media strategy, designed by a local television affiliate and Lawrence & Schiller advertising agency, during the nation's most-watched sporting event. The agency purchased all local advertising spots during the Super Bowl for its eight largest clients, including the East River Electric member cooperatives.

In conjunction with the Feb. 4, 2007, Super Bowl television broadcast, viewers logged onto a Web site, watched replays of the local Super Bowl commercials and answered ad-related trivia questions. The contest Web pages received nearly 260,000 views during the promotion. The average length of visit was more than 15 minutes.

The winner of the "Sweet TV" big-screen television was Sara Christensen of Sioux Falls. Central Electric Cooperative member John Connor of rural Mitchell won the grill and Greg Drayer of Doland received the DVD player.

The TV station ran on-air promotions for the Super Bowl trivia contest extensively, at no cost to the advertisers. The 2007 Super Bowl was the second-most-watched pro football season climax, according to national surveys.

"East River member systems used this high-exposure opportunity to air the national Touchstone Energy commercials dramatizing innovation and energy-efficiency ideas," said Tom Holt, manager of member services and marketing. "The repetition of the commercials through the local trivia game reinforced these messages and the local cooperatives linkage with the national brand."

Gabriel, Symens, Nelson among SDFU honorees

South Dakota agriculture, government, business and communications leaders were among those honored at the 92nd annual convention of the South Dakota Farmers Union Feb. 9-10.

South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture Larry Gabriel was recognized for his lifetime service to South Dakota agriculture. A former state legislator (1983-1999), Gabriel was appointed to head the agriculture department seven years ago. He has indicated plans to retire later this year.

SDFU President Doug Sombke said the Haakon County rancher has strong opinions but has always been willing to listen to other viewpoints. Gabriel was described as a strong supporter of rural economic development and a supporter of farm policy changes aimed at assisting young producers.

Former Farmers Union state board member and longtime legislator Paul Symens of Amherst received the President's Award. Symens was recognized for his leadership skills as a director of the Redwood Falls-based Farmers Union Marketing and Processing Association and Farmers Union Industries.

East River Electric Power Cooperative General Manager Jeff Nelson was honored with the Farmers Union Cooperative Partner Award for 2007. In presenting the award, Sombke noted that Nelson played a key role in the establishment of the South Dakota Value-Added Agricultural Development Center and has been a strong supporter of renewable fuels development in the state.

Former KWAT Radio farm director Jim Thoreson was selected to receive the annual Farmers Union Farm and Ranch News Award. Thoreson was recognized for his long service as a communicator on behalf of agriculture. In 1985 Thoreson shared a Farmers Union Farm News Award with David J. Law of KWAT for their work leading to the South Dakota State Legislature's trip to Washington, D.C., to lobby on behalf of farmers, ranchers and rural communities.

Additional Farmers Union awards were presented to Rosebud Farmers Union Cooperative Manager Jerome Frasch and Lemmon Farmers Union Insurance Agent Carrie Derschan. Gregory County was presented with the state farm and ranch organization's annual "Outstanding County Award."

Twenty-one Farmers Union members from around the state were saluted for their efforts in recruiting business support as sponsors of the SDFU convention. Leaders in that group were Sherman Vomacka of Gregory, Norris Patrick of White, Gene Ellingson of Forestburg, Delmar and Nancy Mueller of Ethan, Kirk Schaunaman of Aberdeen, Sandee Gittings of Philip, Paul Symens of Amherst and Marvin Frey of Tripp.



Sec. Larry Gabriel



Paul Symens



Jeff Nelson

Crews Assist with Iowa Storm Repairs

A half-dozen utility workers from East River Electric Power Cooperative assisted with power line repairs in February in north central Iowa, following a Feb. 24-25 ice and wind storm.

Corn Belt Power Cooperative, based in Humboldt, Iowa, requested the mutual aid. The generation and transmission cooperative reported 240 high-voltage transmission poles were destroyed and several dozen substations knocked off line by the storm. The State of Iowa declared the north central and northeastern parts of the state a disaster area.

East River Electric sent five line workers and a mechanic, along with vehicles and equipment to assist with rebuilding transmission lines in the Hampton, Iowa, area. The crews loaded up Monday morning and headed toward the "storm job," about 40 miles south of Mason City.

This is the second time in two months that local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative line crews have helped an out-of-state utility make storm repairs. In early January, workers from East River and Sioux Valley Energy rebuilt 14 miles of transmission structures for Dawson Public Power District near Kearney, Neb., while crews from other South Dakota cooperatives assisted in other areas of the Cornhusker state.

"Corn Belt was one of the cooperatives that assisted East River with repairs following the Thanksgiving weekend 2005 ice storm in eastern South Dakota," said Dan Wall, manager of Transmission and Engineering Services. "That's why Touchstone Energy Cooperatives like Corn Belt and East River practice the principle of Cooperation Among Cooperatives – because during storm repairs, many hands working together can restore power much faster."

Basin Electric Board Endorses 25 by '25 Initiative

Basin Electric Power Cooperative's directors at their February board meeting have endorsed the national "25 by '25" initiative.

The initiative sets a voluntary goal calling for 25 percent of the nation's energy sources – electric power, transportation fuels, industrial and commercial – to come from renewable resources, including hydropower, by the year 2025.

The initiative originally began with a group of volunteer farm leaders and has gained support of a broad cross section of agricultural and forest community as well as business, labor, conservation and religious leaders. Today, more than 330

businesses and organizations support the initiative. The initiative is supported by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. So far, 22 governors and five state legislatures have endorsed the initiative.

"This initiative ties in nicely with the renewable objective Basin Electric adopted in 2005 that calls for 10 percent of the cooperative's generation capacity needs to come from renewable energy sources by 2010," said Mike Eggl, Basin Electric senior vice president of External Relations and Communications. "We are already more than 80 percent there and more renewable energy is to come."

Basin Electric Receives AA- Rating from Fitch Rating

New York-based Fitch Rating, national statistical rating agency has given Basin Electric a senior secured debt rating of AA-, with a stable outlook.

This is the first time that Basin Electric's creditworthiness has been analyzed by this nationally recognized statistical rating agency.

Basin Electric's financial condition is also rated by Standard & Poor's (A+, stable) and Moody's Investor Service (A1, stable).

"We're pleased that Fitch Rating has also positively validated Basin Electric's creditworthiness," said Clifton Hudgins, Basin Electric's chief financial officer.

"As a power supplier for our members since 1961, our obligation is to plan, design, construct and operate the generating facilities necessary to meet their demands for electricity since we were formed in 1961. As we proceed with financing the construction of new generating and transmission resources, this rating sends a message to lenders that Basin Electric has the ability and the

financial strength to meet its obligations now and in the future. It also shows our members that Basin Electric will get some of the lowest interest rates on money borrowed. This, in turn, saves millions of dollars that won't be added to the cost of electricity for our members," Hudgins said.

Fitch's analysis took into account the good operating record of Basin Electric's wholesale electric business and the stable operating performance of its subsidiaries, particularly Dakota Gas. The cooperative had several above-average credit characteristics, including long-term power sale contracts through the life of its secured obligations, low cost and reliable power supply resources and sound management policies.

Further supporting the rating is Basin Electric's financial profile.

Fitch viewed Basin Electric's debt service coverage as sufficient and consistent with not-for-profit cooperatives that set rates adequate to meet financial coverage requirements.