

The Cooperative Center
NDAREC headquarters
3201 Nygren Drive NW
Mandan, N.D.



Information Technology & Cybersecurity Conference

May 5-7, 2026

Tuesday, May 5

11:30 a.m.

Lunch

12 p.m.

Welcome and Opening Announcements

12:15 p.m.

Now You See It, Now You Click It. Security Awareness Training and the Attention Trap: Why the Real Problem Isn't Training – IT'S ATTENTION!

John Nagel, *president of CyberNet Security and chief security officer, BEK Communications*

What if the real weakness in security awareness training is not awareness at all, but attention? In a world of overload, interruptions and AI-driven deception, attackers often act like magicians using distraction and misdirection to push good people toward the wrong decision at the wrong moment. This keynote explores how distraction shapes risk and why safer outcomes depend on the design of work, decisions and safer habits.

1:45 p.m.

Cyber Crime in Our Financial System

Jacob Rued, *fraud investigations manager, First Western Bank*

Jacob will address current cybercrime attacks and strategies in the financial system, impacting banks and their customers. He will also discuss why a knee-jerk reaction to going back to checks is a very bad idea. He'll conclude with tips on best practices to protect your organization from cybercrime and check fraud-related loss.

3:15 p.m.

Refreshment Break and Departure to Bismarck State College Advanced Technology Center

3:45 p.m.

Tour of Bismarck State College Advanced Technology Center

1220 Schafer St., Bismarck

5:30 p.m.

Dinner at NDAREC headquarters

Wednesday, May 6

8 a.m.

Hot Breakfast Buffet

8:30 a.m.

AI in Production: How to Govern, Scale, Protect and Prove Value

Tanner Greer, *senior vice president and chief technology officer, Blue Ridge Energy*

AI is moving quickly from experimentation to daily work. The question is no longer whether AI will be used, but whether it will be used safely, consistently, and in a way that produces measurable value. This session provides an end-to-end blueprint for operationalizing AI. This includes establishing policy and data rules, mapping guardrails to enforceable controls, choosing the right tool tiers, piloting responsibly, building a defensible return-on-investment story, preparing board-level messaging, and training users with clear human verification expectations. Designed for both leaders and technical teams, attendees leave with a practical framework they can implement immediately.

9:30 a.m.

Refreshment Break

9:45 a.m.

From Bored to Brilliant: Transforming Cybersecurity Education with Micro Training

Lindsey Mote, *cybersecurity administrator, Mountain View Electric Association*

This session examines why traditional, compliance-driven cybersecurity training often fails to engage employees and what organizations can do differently. Drawing on research, real-world cooperative examples and proven instructional strategies, Lindsey introduces micro learning as a modern, science-based approach to improving engagement, retention and real behavioral change. Attendees will learn practical micro training techniques such as just-in-time learning, gamification, demonstrations and short "flash" lessons to see how these methods can be integrated into existing training programs without increasing budgets and workloads.

(Continued)

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Refreshment Break

From Awareness to Engagement: Building Learning Communities to Foster Cybersecurity Culture

Lindsey Mote, cybersecurity administrator,
Mountain View Electric Association

Lindsey will address how cooperatives can move beyond compliance-driven cybersecurity training and build a true culture of security. This session introduces the concept of learning communities — small, peer-driven groups that make cybersecurity more engaging, relevant and sustainable. Participants will learn how to foster trust, encourage open conversation, and translate existing training efforts into meaningful cultural change, even with limited time, budget and resources.

11 a.m. Refreshment Break

11:15 a.m. NRECA Cyber Champions Open Forum

Melissa Kautzman Kaul, information technology administrator, North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives, and **Lindsey Mote**, cybersecurity administrator, Mountain View Electric Association

Melissa and Lindsey will provide a brief overview of NRECA's Cyber Champions working group. This will include work to date on understanding electric cooperatives' cybersecurity needs across the country, resources and advancing cybersecurity goals with the help of this 12-member working group. Most of all, they welcome this time for your comments, questions and input!

11:45 a.m. Lunch

12:30-4:15 p.m. From Peers to Partners!

Cole Arndt, facilitator - IT coordinator,
Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative

This roundtable discussion is a collaborative space to exchange insights, problem-solving strategies, and build relationships that outlast the conference. The roundtable discussion has become an important cornerstone for the annual conference.

5-9 p.m. Dinner, Cornhole and Ax Throwing 701 Venue, 1700 E. Main St., Mandan

Conference attendees are invited to this local destination for indoor fun and a relaxed atmosphere while hanging out together!

Thursday, May 7

8 a.m. Hot Breakfast Buffet

8:30 a.m. E-ISAC: Reliability, Resilience and Security

Elvin Ramirez, principal cyber threat intelligence analyst, Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center (E-ISAC), North American Electric Reliability Corporation

Elvin will provide an overview on how E-ISAC is positioned to help, available resources, threat metrics and the threat landscape.

9:30 a.m. Refreshment Break

9:45 a.m. North Dakota Information Technology Update

John Rodenbiker, director of cyber operations,
North Dakota Information Technology (NDIT)

This presentation will provide attendees with a snapshot of what the NDIT cyber operations team is working on, cyber threats and mitigations occurring in the real world.

10:45 a.m. Refreshment Break

11 a.m. – noon The New Threat Landscape: AI, Deep Fakes and Other Cyber Risks

Chris Lester, senior forensic examiner, Digital Forensic Services

In an era of rapidly advancing artificial intelligence and increasingly convincing deep fakes, the rural utilities community faces both emerging risks and new opportunities. At the same time, organizations must contend with persistent cyber threats — including ransomware, spear phishing and insider activity — that can lead to financial loss, operational disruption and reputational harm. This presentation will provide a practical understanding of how AI-generated content and deep fakes are created and identified, and how they intersect with broader cybersecurity risks. Attendees will leave with insights to better recognize threats, strengthen defenses and understand the operational, security and legal implications for utility providers.

Noon Conference Evaluations and Adjournment

(Continued)

Meet the Guest Presenters



John Nagel

John Nagel is president of CyberNet Security and chief security officer for BEK Communications.

His extensive experience in strategic-minded technology and business development has led him to several senior positions in Fortune 500 companies. With more than 30 years of experience, his expertise includes venture capital, funding and developing Internet start-ups, software product development, e-commerce and global business experience.

John serves on the board of directors for the Technology Council of North Dakota, ISACA ND, and Computers and Office Technology for Bismarck State College.



Jacob Rued

Jacob Rued is the Fraud Investigations Manager for First Western Bank, a \$2.3-billion asset community bank operating in the Dakotas, Minnesota and Arizona. Jacob holds certifications from the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners and American Bankers Association as a Certified Fraud Examiner and Certified Anti-Money Laundering and Fraud Professional.

Prior to joining First Western in Fargo, Jacob served as a police officer and financial crimes detective for the Fargo Police Department. Jacob remains a licensed peace officer in North Dakota and is a current deputy sheriff of the Cass County Sheriff's Office, where he often happily serves as a "hobby cop" at North Dakota State University Bison football games.



Tanner Greer

Tanner Greer has been with Blue Ridge Energy for 17 years, starting out as an intern right after graduating from Appalachian State University with a degree in computer information systems. Over the years, he's risen through the ranks and, for the past four years, has taken on the role of senior vice president and chief technology officer.

From rolling out major tech upgrades to leading the co-op's efforts against cyber threats, Tanner is always on the lookout for what's next. He's especially excited about harnessing AI to make operations smarter and more efficient, pushing Blue Ridge Energy to the front edge of innovation. With a knack for creative problem solving and a passion for building a future-ready team, Tanner is focused on keeping technology secure, useful and always evolving.



Lindsey Mote

Lindsey Mote is the Cyber Security Administrator at Mountain View Electric Association in Falcon, Colo. She is responsible for protecting critical infrastructure systems and strengthening the organization's cybersecurity posture. As an NRECA Cyber Champion, Lindsey actively promotes cybersecurity awareness, education and best practices for employees, cooperative members and the broader electric cooperative community.



Elvin Ramirez

Elvin Ramirez is a principal cyber threat intelligence analyst at the E-ISAC with more than 18 years of experience in threat Intelligence, threat analysis, security engineering, security architecture and incident response. Elvin joined the E-ISAC threat intelligence team in 2022. Current responsibilities include research on the evolving cyber threat landscape, supporting electricity sector member requests for information, and contributing to the E-ISAC's mission to spread broad cyber situational awareness. Prior to joining E-ISAC, Elvin worked at the Cyber Security Fusion Center and ICS Security Engineering team at Tampa Electric Company.

Elvin has a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Information Systems and a master's degree in cybersecurity - threat intelligence from University of South Florida (USF).



John Rodenbiker

John Rodenbiker serves as the Director of Cyber Operations for North Dakota Information Technology (NDIT). With more than two decades of experience in information security and IT leadership, John brings a proven track record of building world-class cyber programs.

John began his career modernizing IT infrastructure for rural organizations, wiring campuses, building networks, and supporting systems from the ground up. He later served as IT administrator for former U.S. Sen. Byron

Dorgan in Washington, D.C., gaining firsthand experience supporting mission-critical government operations.

He has since led cybersecurity initiatives across multiple industries, including Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota, where he managed information security for more than 350,000 members; Doosan Bobcat, overseeing North American cybersecurity operations; and Eide Bailly, where he helped build and mature enterprise cybersecurity programs to world-class standards.



Chris Lester

Chris Lester is a 30-year veteran of the FBI and a senior forensic examiner at Digital Forensic Services (DFS). He has decades of experience in digital forensics, e-discovery and supporting criminal and civil litigations involving computers.

While employed as a special agent, he received hundreds of hours of training in disciplines including detection of altered digital photography, forensic video analysis, encryption and applied decryption, and cellular forensics.

At the FBI, Chris worked on high-profile cases, including Zacarias Moussaoui's involvement in the 9/11 terror attacks and the Red Lake High School shooting investigation, which involved multiple teenage suspects and hundreds of computers.

Chris was a founding member of the Minnesota Cyber Crimes Task Force and was the Acting Supervisory Special Agent for the Cyber Squad in the Minneapolis Division of the FBI. He taught at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Va., covering standard operating procedures and techniques for new computer forensic examiners and advanced Unix techniques.

Registration Information

For your convenience, online registration is available at www.ndarec.com/ndarec-education-programs. **The registration deadline is April 20.** Your cooperative will be billed back for the cost of the meals and refreshment breaks. No advance payment is necessary.

For NDAREC members with a 2026 prepaid education plan, there is no registration fee/person and no limit on the number of registrations for your cooperative. For members who do not have a prepaid education plan, the registration fee is \$595/person. No advance payment is necessary. NDAREC will send an invoice for the registration fee (if applicable) following the conference.

Cancellations

If you need to cancel your registration, please notify Pamela Clark-Stein at pstein@ndarec.com 14 days in advance of the program. If notice is provided 14 days or more in advance, there is no cancellation fee. If notice is provided less than 14 days in advance, a cancellation fee of \$70/day will be charged. Please note: Substitutions are permitted at no extra charge if NDAREC is notified of the substitution prior to the program date.

Hotel Accommodations at the Comfort Inn & Suites and Days Inn by Wyndham

For your convenience, we've reserved a block of sleeping rooms for May 5 and 6 at the following hotels.

Comfort Inn and Suites

701-204-6712
1516 27th Street NW, Mandan

Reserved Under: REC IT-Cybersecurity Conference
Date: Tuesday, May 5, and Wednesday, May 6
Room Rate: \$109/night
Release Date: 4/24/26
Online Link: [Comfort Inn and Suites | Mandan Area](#)

Days Inn by Wyndham

701-663-8686
2630 Old Red Trail, Mandan

Reserved Under: REC IT-Cybersecurity Conference
Date: Tuesday, May 5, and Wednesday, May 6
Room Rate: \$75/night
Release Date: 4/24/26
Online Link: [Days Inn by Wyndham Mandan Bismarck Area | Mandan, ND Hotels](#)

Special Dietary Needs and Other Accommodations

Please notify Pamela at pstein@ndarec.com of any dietary restrictions such as food allergies, gluten-free options and other special accommodations needed for those attending the conference. A minimum of 72 hours' advance notice is requested.

Conference Planning Committee

Cole Arndt, Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative


Amber Schmalz, Verendrye Electric Cooperative

Melissa Kautzman Kaul, NDAREC

Pamela Clark-Stein, NDAREC

NDARECs

North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

The Cooperative Center
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