

# Employees battle the *Mighty Mo*



About 100 employees gathered on the lawn at Headquarters to show their "UNITED WE SAND" t-shirts. Employees bought the shirts for \$15 in exchange for wearing jeans for a week. The proceeds went to the Missouri Valley Areawide United Way, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

**M**ore than 30,000 hours. It's an impressive chunk of time, and it means a great deal to family, friends and neighbors facing the rising waters of the Missouri River.

That 30,000 hours can save homes where conditions are right. It can forge new friendships. It can unite a community.

Thirty-thousand hours is a conservative estimate of the amount of time Basin Electric employees spent fighting the Missouri River flood this year. The river is flooding across the Midwest because so much rain and snow has fallen that the reservoirs along the system have run out of room. The U.S.

Army Corps of Engineers is releasing record amounts of water from the dams to maintain their integrity, and the Corps will continue to release record levels throughout the summer.

Along Bismarck and Mandan, ND, the flooding has been the worst the cities have seen since before the dam system was built in the early 1950s. Because there was little time

to prepare for this flood event, Basin Electric allowed employees three days of paid time off to help fight it.

At least 145 employees have been directly affected by the flood.

If employees weren't helping their family, friends, coworkers and neighbors build sandbag dikes around their homes or moving items out, they were slinging sand at "sandbag central" or making meals for volunteers.

In addition, Basin Electric donated \$15,000 to each the American Red Cross West Dakota Chapter and the Salvation Army to help with the flood relief efforts.

“I'm in the protected area. . . . We sandbagged our home and we helped our neighbors.”

*Terry Willson, travel coordinator*

The 2011 flood event is unique because the water levels will remain high along the Missouri River system through the summer. The true impact won't be known until the Garrison Dam releases are back to normal. As of July 1, water releases from the Garrison Dam were 145,000 cfs (cubic feet per second). Normal releases are about 30,000 cfs.

“The water was dangerously close to the outlets, so my husband made the decision to shut off the power. . . . It’s not possible for us to live there anymore and maintain sump pumps when we don’t have good access to our home.”

*Nicki Vasbinder, account analyst I*

*The Vasbinders live in the Hoge Island area north of Bismarck. Her family had sandbagged and boarded up patio doors to protect from floating debris. At press time, her yard is full of water and her home had a little more than a foot to go before water reached the main level.*



**This home lifted off its foundation and collapsed into the Missouri River on June 22, just half a block from Blair Mitzel’s home. More about Mitzel on page 30.**



**Mike Perreault, utilities field technician at Dakota Gasification Company, helps fill sandbags to protect the home of Mike Eggl, senior vice president of External Relations & Communications.**



**Each morning at 4:30 a.m., North Dakota National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Dan Job zips up his army combat uniform and heads out into the darkness to check on his soldiers and airmen on the Bismarck and Mandan sides of the Missouri River. Job is Basin Electric’s building superintendent and the senior enlisted leader in the Guard. At the peak of the fight, more than 2,100 soldiers and airmen were on active duty to fill sandbags, direct traffic and patrol dikes and levees.**



Every day, the Zimmermans take a river walk. But it's not a leisurely stroll as in days past. It's knee-deep wading between trees in rubber boots to check on their island home. It's not supposed to be like this. The Missouri River crept up on their home in Ponderosa Riverside Village north of Bismarck, driving them out.

Mike is Basin Electric's voice and data communications supervisor; Sue retired from the cooperative's Financial Services a few years ago. Their home is surrounded by river water, but so far the flood waters have stayed out. Ground water is desperately trying to push its way into their basement, but the Zimmerman's and their three sump pumps are winning that battle.

The sandbag dike protecting their home was built by the hands of coworkers, family, friends and even strangers. Mike and Sue extend a personal message of thanks to all who continue to support them:

*"Sue and I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone for the overwhelming support we experienced during this disaster. From moving personal possessions, the building of the protective dike, the help we received in chopping holes in our basement for additional pumps, the offering of homes for us stay, the wonderful meals and of course the emotional support during the tense and trying moments. Your thoughtfulness and generosity has been so humbling. Our gratitude cannot be expressed sufficiently enough to possibly begin to cover the thanks we need to extend."*

Check out videos from these stories at <http://basinelectric.wordpress.com>.

## Employees impacted by flood share their stories



"I really don't feel good about doing this interview, because we feel pretty fortunate," says Blair Mitzel, payroll supervisor for Basin Electric. "There are so many people in a worse situation than us."

Mitzel has lived in the Hoge Island

area north of Bismarck, ND, for 14 years. Over the Memorial Day weekend, the Mitzels moved everything out of their home. "We took out the baseboards and numbered them, we stripped out the carpet, we stripped everything out because we knew we were going to have three or four feet of water in our house."

Mitzel must boat to his home because all access roads are submerged. He says there are eight Basin Electric and Dakota Gas employees who live in his neighborhood. "We all know each other, and we're becoming very good friends. Like one guy said, 'It's still a wonderful neighborhood.' It's brought us together a lot."

He says there is no way he can repay everyone who has helped him. He says maybe they'll hold a big picnic next summer.



Randy Higgins, chemical products field technician at Dakota Gasification Company, says the river used to be 100 feet from his house. Now, it's made itself at home in his basement.

"We had to keep raising the level of our dike with the amount

of water the Corps (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) was releasing. First they told us 75,000 cfs (cubic feet per second), then 90,000, then it was up to 150,000. It was working pretty good up until about 10 days ago," Higgins says.

Now, he's pumping water to try to keep the level down to just a couple inches in his basement. He removed insulation from behind the wall in his basement so it doesn't wick water up to the main level.

"It's been a good diet plan. When you sandbag for a month and a half straight, you lose weight." Higgins says he lost 35 pounds.