

# NEBRASKA

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Magazine

February 2024

## A LOVE OF LIVESTOCK



### Inside:

• Cheers to the Afterlife • Stay Out of Utility Substations • Efficiency Tips for Manufactured Homes

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Telling the story of  
Rural Nebraska

Volume 78  
Number 2  
February 2024



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Published monthly by the Nebraska Rural Electric Association, 1244 K Street, Box 82048, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501, (402) 475-4988.

Advertising in the *Nebraska Magazine* does not imply endorsement for products by the Nebraska Rural Electric Association. Correspondence should be sent to Wayne Price, Editor, *Nebraska Magazine*, Box 82048, Lincoln, NE 68501.

The *Nebraska Magazine* is printed by the Aradius Group, 4700 F Street, Omaha, NE 68117. Form 3579 should be sent to *Nebraska Magazine*, Box 82048, Lincoln, NE 68501.

Periodicals postage paid at Lincoln, Neb. POSTMASTER: send address changes to *Nebraska Magazine*, 1244 K Street, Box 82048, Lincoln, NE 68501.

Publication numbers are USPS 071-630 and ISSN 0193-4937.

Subscriber Services: Cost of subscription for consumers of participating member-systems is \$2.14 per year (17.8 cents per month), plus periodicals postage paid from equity accruing to the consumer. For nonmembers, a subscription is \$10 per year or \$20 for three years, plus local and state tax. Single copy, \$2.50.

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## 10 Cheers to the Afterlife

Raise a toast to the unique blend of history, hospitality, and paranormal activity at the Iron Horse Saloon. Writer LaRayne Topp shares the story of a beloved Nebraska haunt that promises more than just home cookin' and drinks—a journey through time and ghostly tales await.

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*Josh Layman, showman, (left), leads his lamb as a member of the Unified Showing 4-H Club, accompanied by Tatum Terwilliger. See the related article on Page 6. Photograph by Delynn Day/3D Imaging*



Wayne Price

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## Public Power Puts Customers at the Heart of Decision-Making

At the heart of public power is local control. Community leaders make policy decisions so that utility services are in tune with customers' needs and values. At Nebraska's public power districts and electric cooperatives, decisions on vital services that affect every home and business are made by a locally elected board of directors through an open and democratic process. The publicly elected board members understand their most important responsibility is to serve the needs of their customers and to protect the affordability of electricity and the reliability of the electric system.

With local control also comes access for electric consumers. Customers have a voice in the activities of their electric systems. Public Power is, after all, the public's business. An electric utility's board of directors meets to discuss the current and future needs of the utility and to make decisions regarding the operations of the utility. These board members vote to set rates and they participate in a wide variety of programs geared to improving Nebraska's economy and overall quality of life. Of course, these board meetings are open to the public and allow an opportunity for concerned customers to be heard.

Local control means your public power utility knows you and has deep roots in your community. It's your family, your friends, and your neighbors who work for and operate your power district. Nebraska's rural electric member-systems employ more than eleven hundred individuals across some of our state's most rural areas. Governing board members have a stake in every decision they make and take a sincere interest in the local economy and the welfare of the community they serve.

Nebraska's publicly controlled rural electric utilities have operated successfully under this model for nearly 90 years. People like having a say in matters that affect them. And we are glad they do, as customer feedback helps keep us on track and pushes us to do better.

Do you have a concern you would like to bring to the attention of your electric utility? Nebraska's rural electric public power districts and electric cooperatives invite you to attend a board meeting. At these meetings, you can voice your opinion or share a concern directly with the board of directors. Every resident of Nebraska can provide input into how his or her local electric system is operated.



Chet McWhorter

Chet McWhorter is the General Manager of Cuming County Public Power District, headquartered in West Point, Nebraska

## Navigating the Currents of Change

I was visiting with my oldest sibling the other day. We were talking about life and so on as one does with someone, they have known their entire life. You know, where you talk about everything and nothing in the same breath with full knowledge that there is no breakdown in communication or intent by either party. The conversation turned to work, as it often does, and I was asked about quotes and why I use them in my writing. I replied, "I'm not smart enough to explain my ideas so I find someone smarter than me and use their words to describe the thought." To which she replied, "So, you don't really have new ideas?" Which hurts if I'm honest but is accurate. As the wisest man in the world, King Solomon, stated "There is nothing new under the sun." Wouldn't life be simpler if all communication was so clear and pure?

So, why did I reveal this secret conversation with my mean old sister? Because she is wise, and she made me think long and hard about what it is that we are trying to accomplish here and why we are trying to accomplish it. From my perspective, we are in the middle of the largest singular transition in human history. We are on the precipice of Artificial Intelligence in the mainstream, we are in the middle of transitioning the entirety of ground transportation from direct fossil fuel/internal combustion engines to a more indirect fossil fuel powered battery type drivetrain and as if that weren't enough, we are transitioning our power system away from tried-and-true baseload generation to intermittent, unpredictable, and less-reliable renewable generation resources. As noted, this is a huge transition!

Normally, I'm all about change. I love the unpredictability and ebb and flow of life. When change is made for change's sake, I lose my desire to participate. Electricity has become so intertwined into our existence in the modern world that it is hard to imagine what life would be like without this readily available, reliable, and affordable tool. The federal government is pushing towards the precipice of what the grid can truly handle and once the tipping point of too many non-dispatchable, intermittent generation resources is reached, we will experience blackouts, brownouts, and/or complete outages. This is a real fear that I have, and it is becoming all the more likely with each passing day and each passing idea that comes along driving us away from the tried-and-true baseload generation. We must maintain a balance between renewable energy resources and nuclear, hydroelectric, and fossil-fueled baseload generation resources.

What, you may ask, are you to do with this information? I recommend reading this magazine and other trusted sources for news of the electrical industry and when you see something that doesn't make sense to you, I recommend that you reach out to your local utility and/or your elected officials and tell them how you feel. If more folks stay engaged and aware, we can save this system and keep the lights on for generations.

# A Love of Livestock

In 2020, Allison Walbrecht, a 16-year-old student at Lincoln Southwest High School, had an innovative idea — one combining her love for agriculture with her desire to provide opportunities to children with disabilities.

But, she wondered, would it really work?

Her idea: create the Unified Showing 4-H Club. In it, a youth with a disability would pair with a teen helper in a “showman and buddy” partnership to develop skill in animal husbandry and ultimately participate in the 4-H livestock exhibition at the Lancaster County Fair.

She had her doubts.

“I was so scared they would hate it,” said Walbrecht, part of the fifth generation of a Lancaster County ranch family.

But then Josh Layman, one of the first club participants, arrived at her family’s ranch and dispelled her worries. Josh, who is autistic, ran straight to the lamb pen and plopped down excitedly in the middle of the creatures.

“The lambs came right up to him, and they ate right out of his hand,” said Walbrecht, now a sophomore animal science major at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. “The lambs knew immediately that Josh had this love for them and for livestock. It was beyond anything I could ever describe.”

Josh became an enthusiastic member of the club, and in the years since, his experiences have demonstrated Unified Showing’s life-changing possibilities. He has steadily deepened his knowledge and developed into a first-class showman. This year at the Lancaster County Fair, he was asked to compete in the sheep show — and became the lightweight champion.

“It’s blossomed into an amazing thing,” said Calvin DeVries, the Nebraska Extension 4-H educator for Phelps and Gosper counties. He was the Lancaster County 4-H educator when Walbrecht began the club.

“Everybody’s talking about it, everybody wants to do it,” he said. “I hope it can be something that grows into a statewide event in the soon to near future.”



Gage and Otoe counties, in addition to Lancaster, now have Unified Showing Clubs, and several counties, including Box Butte, have adopted the curriculum.

Unified Showing aims to send an important message about understanding others and expanding people’s opportunities, Walbrecht said.

“Youth getting agricultural experience and the skills that 4-H teaches them — there’s no limit on how valuable that is,” she said.

Unified Showing has come to hold great meaning for Josh and his family, said his mother, Kristi.



*The excitement shown by Josh Layman (left) gave Allison Walbrecht needed encouragement when she was starting the Unified Showing 4-H Club. Photograph by Delynn Day/3D Imaging*

everything to those kids, to get to show their animal at the fair,” he said.

“If you were to compare attendance at every event on the livestock side that I’ve witnessed myself, I think the stands have been the fullest at the point when this is taking place,” DeVries said. “You can just see everybody in awe. If there’s one thing that stands out in conversations after the fair, I think it’s always that Unified Showing.”

The club’s benefits also extend to the teen buddies.

“Some of the buddies are involved in agriculture and some of them have never seen a livestock animal before either,” Walbrecht said. “It’s incredible to see how they are able to grow as a person and be part of that. To see the relationship grow between a showman and a buddy is out of this world. A lot of times, they’ll go to school together, so it’s fun to hear about how they see each other in the halls or just how they grow in appreciation for what they have.”

The Unified Showing Club has been around long enough that some members are starting to age out — but Walbrecht is determined to keep the opportunities going for those teens. So, she has started her own business, Unified Agriculture, a direct-to-consumer beef-sales enterprise creating ag-focused employment opportunities for those with disabilities.

Claire Bruns, a Lincoln Southwest student who was one of the club’s first showmen, is the co-founder of Unified Agriculture, which currently has eight head of purebred Angus steers.

Many of the club’s showmen have developed a passion for livestock raising and care, and it’s important for the ag sector “to let them in the door,” Walbrecht said. “I think every reason why it’s important to have anybody involved

“Allison, her mother, Denise, and the Unified Showing buddies have been such a blessing to Josh,” she said. “Watching him each summer with them and the sheep has brought Josh’s dad and I such joy. And we are so proud of him. Seeing him develop such a positive relationship with them and the sheep is heartwarming.”

Livestock events featuring Unified Showing members regularly produce a surge of audience attention as club members display their lambs, halt them and answer judges’ questions, DeVries said.

“The 20 minutes they have in the ring — that’s

**Continued on Page 8**

## From Page 7

in agriculture are the exact reasons — times a thousand — why it’s important to have my kids involved.”

Long term, Walbrecht aims to maintain her Unified Showing and Unified Agriculture initiatives while pursuing a career in marketing for agriculture, to “tell the story” of the beef industry’s benefits for consumers.

Walbrecht’s central reward has been the opportunity to help showmen discover and display their talents, she said.

“But then to be able to say I have been blessed enough to be within an industry my entire life and be able to share that with people who might not have that opportunity — it’s been the greatest joy of my entire life.”



*Claire Bruns (left) and Allison Walbrecht are co-founders of Unified Agriculture, a direct-to-consumer beef-sales enterprise creating ag-focused employment opportunities for those with disabilities. Many of the showmen in the Unified Showing 4-H Club have developed a passion for livestock raising and care, and it’s important for the ag sector “to let them in the door,” Walbrecht said. Photograph courtesy of Hannah Dorn LLC*



Always assume a downed power line is energized. Downed lines can energize the ground up to 35 feet away.

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**By Alex Collins, Inventor**

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# CHEERS TO THE AFTERLIFE

*Nebraska's Iron Horse Saloon,  
Where History Meets Hauntings*

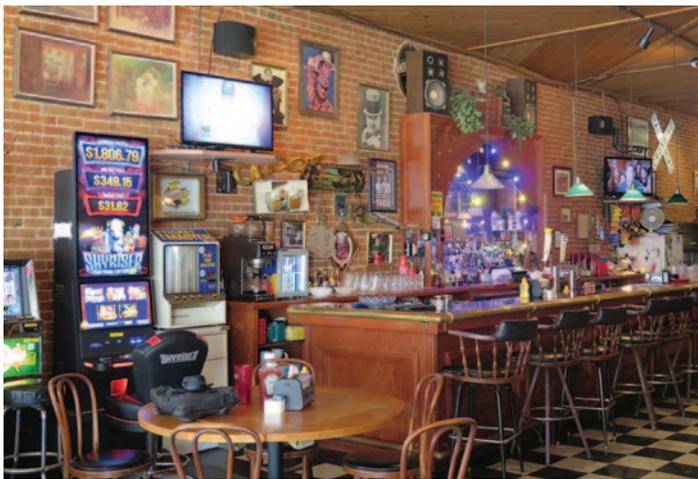
**By LaRayne Topp**

An old time steam engine chugs along the front window of the Iron Horse Saloon in Hooper, Nebraska. Trailing puffs of smoke and railroad cars, it advertises “home cookin’ plus the drinks that will be chugged inside.” Reminiscent of a time when Hooper was new, when railroad passenger cars brought new settlers and businessmen alike to the village, secrets abound in Dale and Carmen Maurers’ Iron Horse Saloon.

Three buildings, side by side, make up the restaurant and bar and all three are still haunted with visitors from the past. Housed in the old Dodge County Bank Building, a hidden stairway once led to a secret vault in the basement where money and a second set of books were stashed during the Great Depression. Where spirits roam the buildings, friendly but unsettling, all the same.

But out in plain sight—below the ceiling’s wooden architecture and authentic tin—are plenty of old-time artifacts: Americana, vintage beer signs, a working player piano, movie posters ranging from John Wayne classics to the Three Stooges, and neon signs advertising everything from soup to nuts. They are packed into every square inch Dale can find.

The Maurers, who both grew up in nearby Fremont, have supervised this menagerie of memorabilia for nearly



*Opposite: Dale and Carmen Maurer are owners and operators of the Iron Horse Saloon on Hooper's Main Street.  
Left: Wooden and tin ceilings plus an old time bar are features at the Iron Horse Saloon.*

*Below: The Iron Horse Saloon is a mainstay on Hooper's Main Street.*

*Photographs by LaRayne Topp*

30 years. Carmen was employed by the previous owners since August of 1987. The couple purchased the property in May of 1994.

It was not the couple's lifelong dream to own the Iron Horse Saloon, but they were made an offer they couldn't say no to. They purchased what they describe as three, cool, old, two-story buildings along the Main Street of Hooper. They've been staked out in Hooper ever since, experiencing "some fabulous years." The couple lives in an apartment upstairs.

The southernmost of the three buildings is home to various rental businesses while the Saloon is in the center. When they purchased Bill's Bar, the northernmost building, along with the property they inherited a ceiling with holes large enough to see the sky. Doors were flopping from the hinges. They added a new roof in 1998. Today, the pool hall features pool and shuffleboard tables, and filling the space above the pool tables are vintage Nascar and beer signs.



Dale discovers his finds at auctions and from private collections. "When you find something that trips your trigger, you buy it," he explained.

"You spend two-thirds of your life collecting, and the last third finding a home for it," Carmen said.

The walls were empty when they signed the deed, however Dale has been a collector all of his life. Soon the walls were wallpapered with items capturing the interest of

both new and regular customers. Framed photographs from the Nebraska Historical Society spark not only interest but also comments from the townspeople in and around Hooper.

"When you see the pictures on the wall, you see the history of the area," Dale said.

Carmen's mother, Helene Svitak, has been engaged in photo restoration and has worked on a number of photographs. As a result, her daughter appreciates the history attached to many of them, and is also partial to her mother's collection of cameras. One of them is a rare studio, standing floor camera, which utilized 8" x 10" film.

Along with repeat customers, when the Mauers first moved in to the Hooper bar, Dale often heard someone walking around upstairs, even though the door to it was locked. The sound of it made his dog growl and the hair on the back of his neck stand up.

"I was spooked out, but not scared," Dale said. "The place used to be run as Bill's Bar, so some patrons come back to haunt us."

At other times, Dale could feel someone kick the bar stool he was seated on, or someone tugging at his shirt. "I've heard my name called out 50 or more times," he said, and he has seen slices of toast go flying through the air.

In by-gone days, the upstairs rooms held a doctor's office with a barbershop in the basement. "There was something very ornery downstairs," Dale said, so he felt compelled to call in a team of experts.

Paranormal operatives set up their equipment in the buildings on several occasions. They caught the images of a ghost on camera.

"There were orbs flying all the time," Dale said, "and glowing balls caught on camera."

In one session they recorded the cries of a little girl in the basement. Two different investigators have seen the image of a little girl in a white dress and heard voices. A little girl who may have been drawn to the blossoming town of Hooper years ago by the chugging engine of an Iron Horse.

# LB 837 Seeks to Redefine Voting Districts for Public Power Board Members

by James Dukesherer, NREA Director of Government Relations

The second session of the 108th Legislature is well underway. This year we have a short 60-day session, with an expected adjournment date of April 18th. It may seem like an adjournment date in April will provide plenty of time to conduct the state's business, but from a lobbyist's perspective, the clock is ticking. Bill introduction and debate of the rules tied up most of the early days of this year's session. After bills are introduced, each and every bill receives a public hearing leaving only time in the mornings for legislative floor action. February 29th will be the final date of bill hearings and then full-day floor debate can occur. This leaves about 20 days remaining in the session when full day debate begins. If each senator designates one bill as their priority for the year, each committee designates two bills as their priority, and the Speaker designates 25 bills, the Legislature will have more than 100 priority bills to address during this limited time.

With a focus on priority bills and some of the most pressing issues facing our state, it can be difficult to find an avenue to pass legislation that may not be designated as a "priority" but none the less is an important issue. NREA is seeking the passage of LB 837, a bill that will likely fall into this category of bills.

We are all aware (and proud) of the fact that our public power districts and electric cooperatives are governed by a locally-elected board of directors. Board members at public power districts can be selected in a couple of different ways. Some rural power districts have board members that run to hold district-wide seats, some break the districts up into multiple seats with substantially equal population in each district, some power districts assign board seats by regional lines, and there are some that utilize a combination of these options when designing board member voting districts.

Current state law stipulates that when designing these boundary lines public power districts can either follow county or

voting precinct lines, or they can divide precincts but there must be similar populations in each voting district. Unfortunately, the boundaries of rural power districts often do not follow county and precinct lines. Including entire precincts or counties into a board member voting district can result in individuals who are not served by a particular power district being able to vote for and serve on that power district board. On the other hand, public power districts can split up voting precincts when dividing up board member voting districts, however, they must ensure that substantially equal population resides in each district. In rural Nebraska, this can mean that each voting district's population can deviate by only a few dozen people. This can be nearly impossible to design when a small town (for example) resides in the corner of a rural power district and the rest of the rural district has very little population.

LB 837 was introduced by Senator John Lowe of Kearney on behalf of the NREA. The measure would allow public power districts to split voting precincts when determining the boundaries of board member seats without regard to population. The Power Review Board (our regulator) would maintain the final authority to approve the boundary lines and is tasked with ensuring the director boundaries do not prejudice the interests of electric consumers.

Individuals that are serving on and voting for board seats of our state's public power districts should be customers of the power district they wish to represent. LB 837 would improve the election process and help to ensure that public power board member districts are defined in a way that ensures a fair and just representation on the board of directors. As the NREA looks for a path to pass LB 837, we appreciate the grassroots support of the rural electric consumers our members serve across the state and look forward to representing you on the issues that impact the electric industry.

## A Great Gift Idea



When Mom and Dad moved to town they missed getting Nebraska Magazine so I bought them a subscription. It only cost \$10 plus tax. Call **402-475-4988** to get your subscription started today.

## Larry's Safety Lesson

# Horses gallop and so can power lines

By **Larry Oetken**



Gallop power lines are typically caused when ice and high winds occur at the same time.

Freezing rain creates icicles and odd-shaped ice formations on power lines. The ice buildup changes how wind and air impact the now misshapen, ice-covered line. This change in airflow can cause the power line to start to bounce.

Once the lines get going, they can bounce and buck enough to hit another line, damage themselves enough to cause a power outage or even fall to the ground.

There is not much a power company can do to alleviate galloping lines since the wild motion is caused by Mother Nature. To help prevent this, many power lines have special mechanisms, such as twisted wire or round or angular pieces of metal, attached to the line. While they can help, sometimes they are no match for severe ice and whipping wind.

Aside from ice storms, year-round storms can cause damaging winds, which can knock down power lines and blow trees and limbs onto power lines.

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Larry Oetken is the Job Training & Safety Coordinator for the Nebraska Rural Electric Association.

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# UNMC & Nebraska Medicine: Addressing Nebraska's health workforce shortage

Katie Schultis, a fourth-year University of Nebraska Medical Center student, is from Diller, a town of 250 in southeast Nebraska. Like many rural areas, Diller faces a critical shortage of health professionals.

"Growing up, I was well aware of the limited access many communities in our state have to the care they need and deserve," Schultis says. "That's why, when my education is complete, I'll be going home." Schultis is not alone. Nearly 60% of the physicians, dentists, pharmacists and physician assistants practicing in Greater Nebraska – outside of the Omaha and Lincoln metro areas – were educated at UNMC and received training at Nebraska Medicine, the university's primary clinical partner.

But there is still work to be done. UNMC and Nebraska Medicine, a leading American academic health system, are committed to addressing the growing health care needs of all Nebraskans - UNMC, as the state's only public sciences university, and Nebraska Medicine, as a major clinical partner of UNMC and the primary teaching hospital for the state.

## 'Leading the world'

In collaboration with the University of Nebraska at Kearney, UNMC has grown in central Nebraska, adding new facilities and expanding programs. This includes a \$95 million Rural Health Education Building and medicine, nursing, pharmacy and public health programs.

The expansion builds upon the success of the Health Science Education Complex, which opened in 2019 through a partnership between UNMC and UNK. Due for completion in late 2025, the new project will increase the number of health professions students



**Kaitlyn Schultis & Edson DeOliveira**  
UNMC College of Medicine, Class of 2024

training in the region by more than 250% and help fill shortages in medical professions around Nebraska.

"The combined campus in Kearney will be the largest interdisciplinary health care rural training campus in the United States," UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey Gold, MD, says. "It's just another way that Nebraska is leading the world."

When fully operational, the Rural Health Education Building and existing Health Science Education Complex will have an annual economic impact estimated at \$34.5 million.

## Impacting care for all Nebraskans

Nebraska Medicine, as the primary clinical partner of UNMC, is dedicated to providing health care for all Nebraskans. As a non-profit, integrated health system, its providers care for patients from every county in the state.

Across Nebraska, 70 specialty and primary care clinics offer a wide range of services. This includes 20 satellite clinic locations in towns such as Alma, Broken Bow, Cambridge, Columbus, Cozad, Grand Island, Hastings, Kearney, North Platte and York.

Nebraska Medicine – like many hospitals across the state – relies on UNMC to grow our health care workforce and on students like Schultis.

"Medical students just like me, from rural communities throughout Nebraska, are getting their education at UNMC and training at Nebraska Medicine," she says. "And like me, they'll be going home to provide much-needed care."

While expanding Nebraska's health workforce is crucial, it's only one step UNMC and Nebraska Medicine are taking in and across Nebraska. Explore this "once-in-a-generation" opportunity for Nebraska at [unmc.edu/next](https://unmc.edu/next).



**Kaitlyn Schultis**  
UNMC College of Medicine, Class of 2024

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Substations are part of the electrical generation, transmission and distribution system. Transformers are contained inside many of them, and their job is to transform voltage from high to low or vice versa, depending on their location within the distribution path.

Besides transformers, substations usually house switches, protective devices and control equipment. In large substations, circuit breakers are used to interrupt any short circuits or overloads that may occur.

No one should approach a substation, touch the fence or enter the gate unless they are authorized to do so.

Paying attention to individuals and activity around substations and other utility equipment helps keep everyone safe. Here are some things to look for:

- Take notice of individuals in street clothes working near or on utility equipment; if you see this, please report it immediately.
- Notice whether individuals are dressed in proper personal protective gear or have utility identification badges.
- Check vehicles or work trucks in the area for utility branded logos or information.
- Report any suspicious behavior you see, including non-utility employees tampering with utility poles, meters, padmount transformers or other equipment.

If you notice anything unusual at a substation, please report it to the utility. Examples include the following:



- An open or unlocked gate.
- A damaged fence.
- Obvious damage to equipment inside the fence.

Call 911 and then the electric utility if you see smoke or fire inside a substation. Same for non-utility workers inside the substation fence.

Never try to address an issue yourself. Please report any suspicious activity or damage to the police or the utility.

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36	9.12	8.12	10.32	9.44	14.04	12.34	21.08	17.72	59	31.07	23.51	55.50	38.76	97.94	67.13	187.74	128.85
37	9.21	8.37	10.52	9.81	14.80	12.99	21.93	19.41	60	34.14	24.28	59.98	41.71	108.51	72.34	206.17	139.28
38	9.21	8.48	11.69	10.16	15.63	13.80	23.63	20.24	61	37.41	25.65	66.43	47.11	121.89	83.65	235.75	155.05
39	9.46	8.61	12.35	10.56	16.47	14.31	24.48	21.72	62	41.07	27.91	73.90	51.33	135.77	92.10	264.90	170.34
40	9.63	8.83	12.94	11.01	17.32	15.16	26.15	23.62	63	44.58	34.39	85.55	59.61	151.36	101.40	286.97	186.91
41	10.05	9.05	13.66	11.61	19.38	16.77	29.55	26.00	64	48.23	38.53	93.16	64.39	168.32	111.96	322.16	205.24
42	10.47	9.26	14.21	12.46	21.07	18.19	32.93	28.33	65	53.18	41.15	100.34	70.37	187.54	124.63	355.74	228.60
43	10.98	9.39	14.72	13.25	23.23	19.77	37.92	30.98	66	59.15	44.62	115.74	75.41	208.45	134.77	391.94	247.94
44	11.58	9.73	15.68	14.10	25.26	21.41	40.74	33.71	67	65.66	49.09	130.13	83.65	230.15	147.28	435.98	271.62
45	12.25	10.15	16.86	15.16	27.90	23.58	45.56	37.10	68	74.33	59.65	145.11	112.92	261.19	173.71	490.41	321.07
46	12.84	10.65	17.85	15.87	29.57	24.92	48.79	40.01	69	82.98	65.91	161.68	129.33	292.32	187.50	547.39	351.10
47	13.43	11.16	19.14	16.84	32.11	26.60	53.23	43.43	70	93.20	73.30	181.25	148.72	329.12	203.80	614.73	386.58
48	13.48	11.89	20.45	17.77	34.21	28.42	57.55	47.03	71	102.45	82.71	204.38	159.34	373.07	234.59	701.44	442.89
49	13.71	12.33	21.77	18.77	37.13	30.30	62.64	51.38	72	113.68	94.13	232.46	172.23	426.44	271.99	806.74	511.27
50	14.37	12.99	23.41	20.00	39.68	33.31	68.66	56.29	73	127.55	108.24	267.15	188.15	492.36	318.18	936.81	595.73
51	15.38	13.75	25.38	21.18	44.27	34.98	77.40	61.17	74	142.08	123.01	303.50	204.84	561.42	366.57	1073.07	684.22
52	16.37	14.88	28.02	22.76	49.00	37.94	86.81	66.81	75	159.25	140.48	346.45	224.56	643.04	423.76	1234.11	788.80
53	17.46	15.88	30.96	24.81	54.33	43.09	100.55	76.04	76	200.03	174.92	418.29	276.67	784.08	529.52	1488.28	981.25
54	18.69	16.72	34.00	26.21	59.70	45.15	111.53	82.80	77	249.54	216.74	505.52	339.94	955.35	657.94	1796.92	1214.92
55	20.64	17.51	37.14	27.86	66.68	49.42	121.67	89.56	78	310.70	268.40	613.27	418.11	1166.92	816.58	2178.16	1503.59
56	22.69	19.48	41.67	31.07	73.22	52.92	139.32	96.36	79	374.78	322.52	726.16	500.00	1388.55	982.78	2577.57	1806.01
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There are several tasks you can complete to improve comfort and use less energy in your manufactured home. I started my career in energy efficiency as a weatherization technician in Wisconsin. In this role, I helped people in manufactured homes by air sealing, duct sealing, adding insulation and installing new windows, showerheads, faucet aerators and lightbulbs.

More than 22 million Americans live in manufactured homes, according to the National Association of State Energy Officials. Manufactured homes represent 15% of housing in rural areas, and only 3% in urban areas.

Knowing how manufactured homes are built helps us understand where we can seal in savings around the house. These homes are constructed in factories and then transported and set up on-site. Construction in a factory reduces costs, making manufactured homes an affordable option. That lower price point can come, in part, from the use of less expensive equipment and fewer materials, such as lower-efficiency heating equipment or less insulation.

If you are considering buying a manufactured home, EnergyStar-certified manufactured homes are 30% more energy efficient than standard models, with a variety of options that increase the home's energy efficiency.

If you already live in a manufactured home, you likely know that manufactured homes are constructed in sections. One section is a single wide home, two are combined to make a double wide home and three make a triple wide home.

In my experience, the biggest issues were in the duct systems, which deliver heating and cooling throughout the homes. The ductwork is typically located in the cavity between the floor and the transport barrier, which protects the underside of the manufactured home while it is transported from the factory to the site. Typically,

one long duct runs the length of each section of the home, with the registers or vents cut into it.

The first step is making sure all registers are accessible, open and not covered by furniture, rugs, dog beds or anything else.

Next, check your ductwork by removing the registers and looking inside. Anything inside the duct will restrict airflow, so check that it is free and clear. Use a mirror and flashlight to look into the duct or take a picture by sticking a camera or phone inside and snapping some shots with flash in each direction. I've pulled all kinds of things out of ducts over the years, from garbage to toys to shoes.

If you have a double wide or triple wide, you will likely have a crossover duct, which joins the ducts in each section. The crossover duct is typically a large flexible duct with an inner liner, insulation and an outer cover to protect the insulation. Damaged or disconnected crossover ducts allow the air you pay to heat escape under the home. Often, damage is done by animals chewing or scratching to get inside the warm area. An inspection of the crossover duct requires crawling under the home. That's a dirty job and often a tight spot, so you might choose to hire a professional.

Another place to check is the joint joining the sections of a double wide or triple wide together. This is often covered by trim when the home is placed. You can caulk around the trim or remove it and caulk underneath to reduce air leakage.

Weatherstripping doors and windows to make sure they seal tightly will also reduce drafts and save energy. Some homes can benefit from additional insulation in the attic or under the floor. Those projects typically require specialized equipment or help from a professional.



*Knowing how manufactured homes are built helps us understand where we can seal in savings around the house. Photograph by Dakota Lim*



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# Set the Menu for a Successful Start

If your goals for 2024 include a healthier lifestyle and added nutrition, your mission is likely to start with a refreshed menu. Add a few newfound favorites to this year's rotation like wraps and smoothies to power each day and propel yourself toward wellness success.

Grab tortillas out of the pantry and a few favorites from the refrigerator to make these BLT Wraps with Avocado Spread, which are perfect for meal-prepping weekday lunches or whipping up at a moment's notice for a family dinner. Bacon teams up with a homemade avocado spread, lettuce and tomatoes for fresh taste without the hassle.

For a satisfying meal without leaving behind health goals, serve with a hearty salad or Spanish rice and banana peppers on the side.

Giving your mornings a delicious boost doesn't have to be a chore. In fact, it can be just as easy as it is delicious with a fresh, fruity smoothie ready in a matter of minutes.

Just six blended ingredients are all you need to make this Strawberry Oatmeal Smoothie, a creamy solution that makes for a nutritious, refreshing and filling breakfast before heading out the door.



## BLT Wraps with Avocado Spread

- 8 slices bacon
- 1 avocado, peeled and pitted
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1 lime, juice only
- 1/2 teaspoon hot sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 4 flour tortillas
- 4 large red leaf lettuce leaves
- 2 large tomatoes, cut into 1/4-inch slices
- Spanish rice (optional)
- banana peppers (optional)

In medium bowl, mash avocado, sour cream, lime juice, hot sauce, Worcestershire sauce and salt with fork until combined and smooth.

Spread thin layer of avocado mixture over tortillas. Layer with lettuce leaves, tomatoes and bacon. Fold sides up and roll.

Serve with Spanish rice and banana peppers, if desired.

In large skillet, cook bacon until crispy. Drain on plate lined with paper towels. Set aside.

## Reader Submitted Recipes



### Strawberry Oatmeal Smoothie

- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1 banana
- 14 frozen strawberries
- 1 cup soy milk
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

In blender, grind oats. Add banana, strawberries, soy milk, sugar and vanilla extract then blend until smooth. Pour into glass or to-go container and serve.

### Hearty Potato Sauerkraut Soup

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 4 cups chicken broth                              | 2 stalks celery                     |
| 1 can cream of mushroom soup                      | 3/4 cup chopped cooked chicken      |
| 16 oz. can sauerkraut (I drain some of the juice) | 1-2 tablespoons of vinegar to taste |
| Fresh mushrooms sliced                            | 2 teaspoons pepper                  |
| 4-5 medium potato cubed                           | 1 teaspoon sugar, optional          |

Cook in crockpot for 10-12 hours or on stove for a couple of hours. Top with 2 slices bacon, crumbled and 2 diced hard cooked eggs when serving. This is a serious soup, not for the faint of heart.

**Bruce Crosby, McCook, Nebraska**

### Crockpot Italian Chicken

- 4 chicken breasts
- 2 cans cream of chicken soup
- 1 packet Zesty Italian dressing mix
- 2 Tablespoons garlic powder
- 1 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- 1 package of pasta (your choice)

Mix Zesty Italian, cream cheese, chicken soup, and garlic powder in a large bowl. Place chicken breasts in crock pot and pour sauce over it. Cook on low for 4 hours. Cook pasta according to package. Add pasta to chicken and toss. If sauce is too thick, add a little milk.

**Cathy Heidtbrink, Gresham, Nebraska**

### Grandma Rose's Golden Nugget Cookies

- |                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 cup butter           | 1 teaspoon cream of tartar   |
| 1 1/2 cups sugar       | 1 teaspoon vanilla           |
| 6 egg yolks            | 1/2 teaspoon lemon flavoring |
| 2 1/2 cups flour       | 1/4 teaspoon salt            |
| 1 teaspoon baking soda |                              |

Cream butter and sugar, add egg yolks, vanilla and lemon flavoring. Sift together the salt, baking soda, cream of tartar and flour and add to butter/sugar/egg mixing well. Roll into one inch balls. Dip in sugar and place two inches apart on greased baking sheet. Bake in 350 degrees oven for 8 to 10 minutes. Makes 5 dozen.

**Ron Hosek, Carmel, Indiana**

**Wanted: Favorite Easter recipes**  
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**E-mail:** Tina Schweitzer at [tschweitzer@nrea.org](mailto:tschweitzer@nrea.org).

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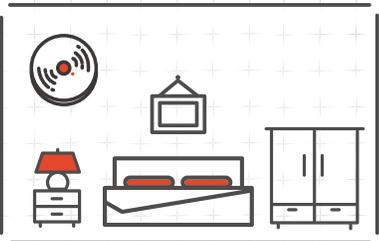
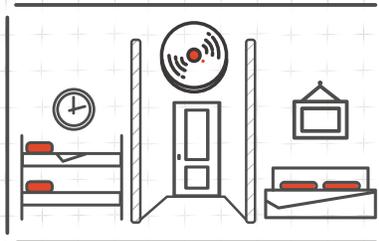
# SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES

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   **2/3** fire deaths occur in homes with missing or non-functioning smoke alarms.

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<p><b>On levels without bedrooms, install in living room, den, or family room</b></p> 	<p><b>Install near stairways leading to upper levels</b></p> 	<p><b>Install smoke alarms 10 feet from cooking appliances to minimize false alarms</b></p> 

 <p>Use <b>interconnected smoke alarms</b> for additional safety and early warning</p>	 <p><b>Low pitch sound</b>, and vibration smoke alarms are available for those who are <b>hard of hearing</b></p>	 <p><b>DO NOT INSTALL</b> near windows, doors, or ducts</p>	 <p><b>NEVER</b> paint smoke alarms</p>
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