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May 2025

Magazine



Nebraska's Fury

March Blizzard Leaves
a Trail of Darkness
Across the State

Tips to Beat the
Energy Peak

May is Electrical
Safety Month

The Ultimate Canine
Water Competition



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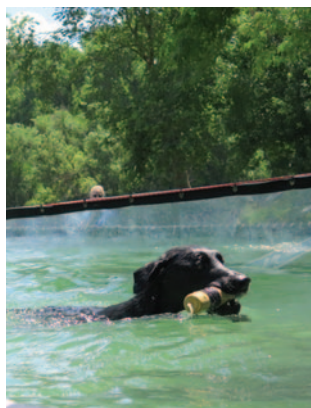
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Brian Mueller, Cornhusker Public Power District meter apparatus substation technician, left, works to rebuild a power line south of Howells, Neb. with the help of Jared Finnegan, lead lineman from Niobrara Valley EMC, right. Photograph by Jessica Kurpgeweit



Wayne Price

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SCAN ME

Road Hazards Ahead: The Deadly Truth About Teen Driving This Summer

As the father of five children I remember facing the summer months with a certain level of trepidation. The freedom from school responsibilities coupled with a desire to go hang out with friends often combines into a dangerous time for young drivers.

Memorial Day marks the unofficial start of summer and, according to AAA, it is the beginning of the “100 Deadliest Days for Teen Drivers,” a time when the roads become more dangerous as teenage drivers spend more time behind the wheel. With school out, these young, inexperienced motorists are not just driving more frequently but are often accompanied by friends, leading to a surge in fatal accidents.

Nearly half of all teen driver-related fatalities occur during this period, according to AAA. Between 2013 and 2022, close to 6,700 people lost their lives in crashes involving teen drivers. In 2022 alone, 707 people were killed—an alarming 10% increase compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

Teen drivers face unique risks, making traffic crashes the leading cause of death for those aged 16-19. Inexperienced and prone to distraction, these young drivers are three times more likely than adults to be involved in a deadly crash. The presence of teen passengers only adds to the danger, as peer pressure often leads to risky behaviors such as speeding or reckless driving. Distractions from cell phones and in-car entertainment systems further compound the problem. Tragically, many of these young drivers and their passengers fail to wear seatbelts, drastically increasing the likelihood of serious injury or death in a crash.

Parental involvement is crucial in shaping responsible driving habits. The single most important thing parents can do to help their teens become safe drivers is to be involved in their ‘learning to drive’ process. Spend time coaching your teen while they’re behind the wheel and have a serious discussion about safety.

Parents must lead by example, demonstrating safe driving behaviors every time they get behind the wheel. They should take an active role in their teen’s driving education, ensuring that they gain experience in various conditions, from navigating heavy traffic to handling poor weather. Defensive driving skills—like anticipating hazards and reacting appropriately—should be a key part of every teen’s training. Establishing clear family driving rules can also make a difference, setting expectations on when and where teens can drive and reinforcing the consequences of unsafe behavior.



Chad Waldow

Chad Waldow is the General Manager of Southern Public Power District headquartered in Grand Island, Neb.

Meeting the Challenge of Load Growth

In the evolving energy landscape, the growth of electricity demand, also known as load growth, can seem like a double-edged sword for Public Power Districts across Nebraska. While it presents challenges in terms of infrastructure, resource management and sustainability, it also has positive effects for the industry. Load growth can function as a catalyst for long-term financial stability, economic development, system improvements and technological innovation.

Load growth refers to the increasing demand for electricity over time, driven by factors such as population growth, economic development, and rising standards of living. For electric utilities across the county, understanding and managing load growth is essential for ensuring reliable, affordable electric service for all. Therefore, optimizing resources and planning for future infrastructure needs is critical.

Planning and Building for the Load

When load growth comes all at once or in large quantities, it can create a series of challenges and have significant impacts on both the utility and its customers. The direct impact of load growth on Public Power Districts is the need for expanded infrastructure. As electricity demand rises, Districts must ensure the generation, transmission, and distribution systems can handle the increased load which may require substantial investment. Districts may need to invest heavily in infrastructure upgrades, either through the construction of new facilities or the reinforcement of existing ones. The process of expanding infrastructure often involves extensive engineering studies, long lead times for materials and equipment, and the coordination of resources and construction schedules.

Reducing the Risk

The financing of this new load can be challenging as infrastructure costs continue to increase. This can be done by socializing the cost across customers District-wide, typically done for organic load growth. The second option is to charge the new load directly for the cost to connect to the system, typically used for new, large step-loads (more than 5MW). When these large loads finance the cost to connect, they reduce the overall risk to the remaining customers of the District. A portion of this investment is paid back to the customer by the District over a period of time, ensuring the customer will be connected for that duration.

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Nebraska's Fury

March Blizzard Leaves a Trail of Darkness Across the State

The calendar may have read mid-March, but Mother Nature had other plans. On Wednesday, March 19th, a relentless blizzard descended upon Nebraska, delivering a swift and brutal punch that left communities reeling in its wake. What began as a seemingly ordinary late-winter storm rapidly transformed into a crippling event, marked by ferocious winds, heavy snowfall, and widespread power outages.

The meteorological culprit was a "powerful" upper-level low-pressure system, a swirling vortex that plummeted to an astonishing 987 millibars, according to the Storm Prediction Center. This atmospheric powerhouse unleashed a tempest of 4-6 inches of snow across the region, accompanied by wind gusts reaching a staggering 70 mph. The initial rain quickly morphed into a heavy, wet snowfall in the early morning hours, creating treacherous conditions. The eastern parts of the state bore the brunt of the snowfall, with Waco recording 12 inches and an astounding 10.1 inches measured just three miles north of York, as reported by the National Weather Service – Hastings.

The sheer force of the storm was amplified by the strong pressure gradient created by the upper-level cyclone, generating intense non-thunderstorm wind gusts. Readings of 72 mph at Kearney and 71 mph at the Hastings Airport underscored the storm's ferocity. The heavy, wet snow, combined with these gale-force winds, created whiteout conditions that paralyzed a wide swath across Nebraska.

The consequences were devastating. Downed power lines and shattered poles became a common sight, plunging countless homes and businesses into darkness.

Some areas endured days without power, as crews from various power districts worked tirelessly to restore electricity. The whiteout conditions were so severe that law enforcement agencies urged residents to avoid all travel, even within city limits. Major roadways, including Interstate 80, were shuttered, effectively severing transportation arteries across the state.

Southern Public Power District reported a staggering 100 downed poles, primarily in Adams, Hall, Hamilton, and Merrick Counties. They also grappled with fallen trees, broken wires, and damaged substation equipment.

Perennial Public Power District, headquartered in York, faced an even more dire situation, with over 95% of its customers without power. This blizzard, the most destructive event since the infamous March 29, 1976, blizzard, required a massive restoration effort involving 48 linemen. By Tuesday, March 25th, they had restored power to 98% of residential customers.

Polk County Rural Public Power District saw outages begin around 6 a.m. on the 19th. Crews were forced to retreat due to the hazardous conditions, leaving two-thirds of their customers without power at the peak. By 10 p.m., 20% were still without power. The next day, Midwest Electric from Grant, Neb., sent a mutual aid crew, and by the end of the day, only 1% remained without power. Midwest Electric then assisted Perennial PPD after helping Polk County RPPD. In total, Polk County RPPD had 30 broken poles.

Cuming County PPD, in West Point, faced over 50 downed poles and numerous broken wires. Their linemen worked relentlessly from Wednesday through

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Opposite: Southern PPD crews work to repair power lines in Hall County.

Photograph by John Gits

Above: North Central PPD crews work on a pole. Photograph by Mark Kirby

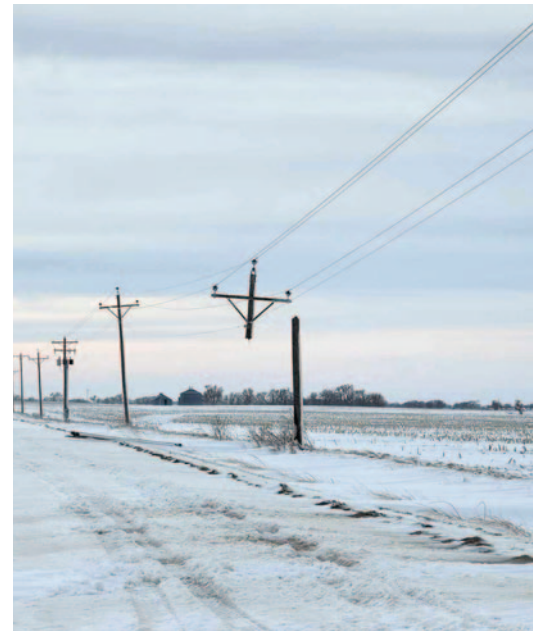
Bottom left: Downed power lines were seen across many districts, including this one north of Saronville, Neb. Photograph by Skyler Kalinski

Bottom right: Cornhusker PPD One Call Maintenance Technician Parker Hughes unloads poles while Loup Power District Line Technician Joe Hubenka, center, and Cornhusker PPD Groundsperson/Tree trimmer Adam Bonczynski, right, frame a pole. Photograph by Jessica Kurpgeweit



Southern PPD lineworkers repair a stretch of power lines in Hall County into the evening. Photograph by John Gits





Top left: Southern PPD mutual aid crews frame a sub-transmission pole for Perennial PPD. From Left to right: Brandon Dunning, Cole Sundberg, and Cal Narber. Photograph by Courtney Giesenhausen.

Top right: The blizzard broke poles across Clay County. Photograph by Caleb Bennett.

Bottom: Cuming County PPD had more than 50 downed poles. Photograph by Brian Throener

From Page 7

Saturday, with most customers restored by Friday. They then deployed to Burt County PPD, aided by crews from KBR and Stanton County PPD, to continue their restoration efforts. The conditions were described as "crazy," with wet, heavy snow, strong winds, and muddy, slushy terrain making the work even more challenging.

The blizzard wreaked havoc on the infrastructure of Butler Public Power District in David City, Neb., with six of the region's seven transmission feeds failing under the storm's ferocity. Additionally, out of 21 substations serving the district, only two remained operational as of Wednesday afternoon. The sheer scale of the damage put immense strain on restoration efforts, making power recovery a daunting task for utility crews.

Adding to the challenge, all three highways leading to the east side of the district were closed, preventing access to the area until Thursday afternoon. This significantly delayed response times and hampered the ability to assess and repair damage in some of the hardest-hit areas.

Beyond the immediate impact on homes and

businesses, the storm also inflicted heavy damage on electrical infrastructure. Over 500 poles were downed, including 25 crucial transmission line poles, which are vital for delivering power across the district.

This blizzard served as a stark reminder of the raw power of nature and the resilience of our communities. The tireless efforts of the linemen, the collaborative spirit of the mutual aid response, and the patience of the affected residents all played a crucial role in navigating this unprecedented weather event.



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Power Life Safely

May is Electrical Safety Month

Every May, Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

Your public power district or electric cooperative understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety not only in May, but year-round.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected. Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home.

1. Be vigilant.

Regularly inspect your home's electrical system for any signs of damage or outdated components and replace any frayed electrical wires or cords. The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying. If you're relying on extension cords as permanent power solutions, consider contacting a qualified electrician to install additional outlets where you need them.

2. Use Surge Protectors.

Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances from surges with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Additionally, surge protectors can lose effectiveness over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.

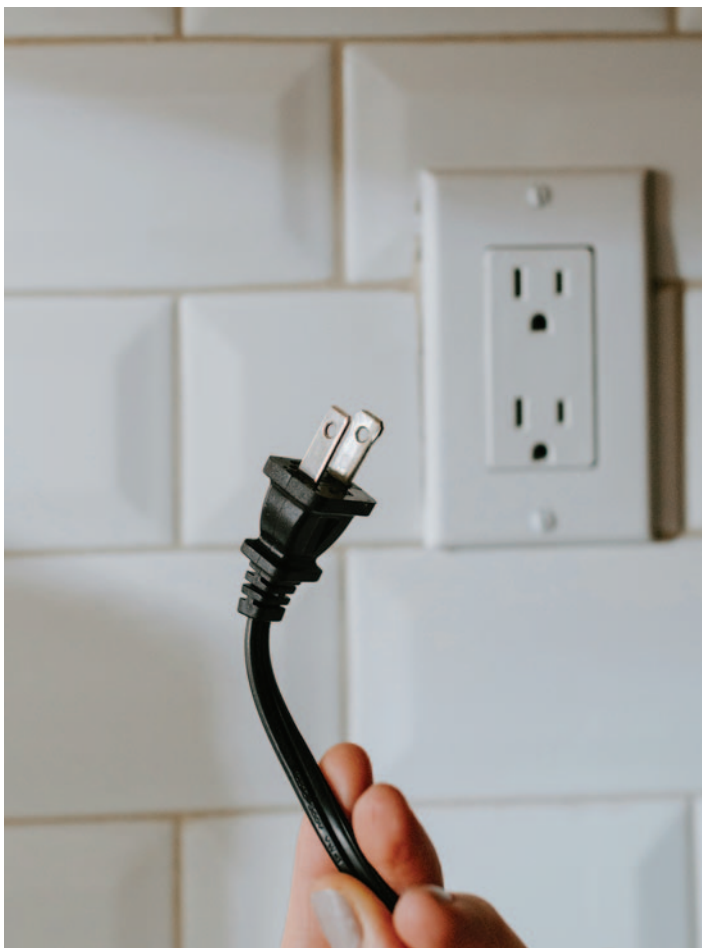


3. Practice Safe Power Strip Use.

Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves and hairdryers should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with a "busy" power strips can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

4. Water and Electricity Don't Mix.

It may seem obvious, but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical



switches or appliances—never handle electrical devices with wet hands. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in close proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor outlets.

5. Educate Family Members.

One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in case of emergencies.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for

Left: Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home.

Photograph by Kelly Sikkema, Unsplash

Top left: The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying. Photograph by Daniel Rossi, Flickr

Top right: Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. Photograph by Zion, Pexels

protecting your family, property and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort—it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones.

Nebraska's Electric Leaders Fight for Affordable, Reliable Power

by James Dukesherer, NREA Director of Government Relations

In addition to the work the NREA does to protect public power in the Unicameral and to keep electric rates low and reliability high, we also work with our federal delegation in Congress on the issues that impact rural electrification. Last month, a delegation of our managers and board members visited Washington, D.C. to attend the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) legislative conference and to meet with our members of Congress. The NRECA represents more than 900 electric cooperatives and public power districts in 47 states.

Each year our members attend this conference to hear from leaders from across the country on the policy issues that are impacting our industry. This year, we heard from agency leaders and members of congress on the status of energy policy in Washington. Once the conference concluded, the attendees descend on Capitol Hill to meet with our federal representatives. It is an amazing site to see thousands of individuals, all representing rural interests, on Capitol Hill at the same time meeting with congressional leaders and advocating for reliable and affordable electricity nationwide.

As we met with the Nebraska members of Congress, our message to our representatives focused on four key issues.

- 1) The roll-back of burdensome EPA regulations.
- 2) The protection of federal grants, loans, and tax structures which help to support electric infrastructure development.
- 3) Permitting reform and reducing the time it takes to build infrastructure.
- 4) Support for the federal hydropower programs and protection against wildfires.

For several years, the electric industry has received pressure from Washington to deploy more renewable sources of electric generation. The EPA has long sought to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from new and existing power plants. Under our new presidential administration, we are seeing a reversal of these regulations. As we meet with our members of Congress,

we will be emphasizing the importance of finding a balance between reliable, affordable, and environmentally sensitive generation resources. As more variable renewable sources of generation enter our national generation mix, we must ensure that the reliability of our electric grid does not suffer.

The electricity industry in Nebraska, and across our nation, is experiencing substantial growth. The deployment of artificial intelligence technologies, data centers, and large industrial users of electricity have dramatically increased our industry's load growth projections. To keep up with these projections, our nation will need to

rapidly construct new electric generation and the supporting transmission and related infrastructure. Infrastructure is expensive, and we are asking Congress to support permitting reform which will allow us to build projects in a timely fashion and to provide federal financial support through grants, loans, and a tax structure that will help to keep our costs down on these projects.

Finally, wildfires are an issue that has received greater attention in recent years. In California, for example, as wildfires have caused widespread damage, electric utilities have been made strictly liable for damages and have been forced to shut off service to customers. While Nebraska already has protection in place for the liability of its electric utilities, we are asking our members of Congress to keep a close eye on this issue. No one wins when an electric utility files for bankruptcy or disconnects service.

These, and other issues like the farm bill, support for advanced nuclear technology, and support for our federal hydropower projects can have a significant impact on Nebraska's electric utilities. Meeting with representatives, agency leaders, and their staff in Washington shows them that the NREA is active on these federal issues and is a source of reliable information. Because the NREA and our members travel to Washington to meet with our representatives, we hope that you know you have a strong voice for rural Nebraska.



A delegation of our managers and board members visited Washington, D.C. to meet with members of Congress.

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Making a Splash

The Ultimate Canine Water Competition

Contestants really dive into this sport. They reach out for the prize, striving to be the winner – the longest, highest or fastest athlete in the competition, or perhaps a combination of all three. Bird dogs, hounds or even what could be considered mutts, when given a chance to compete, can show themselves to be the best of the four-legged, canines around. They'll go to any length to plunge into first place in canine aquatics competition, one of the fastest growing sports on four legs.

Diving Dogs or Dock Diving, a relatively new sport in Nebraska, sees dogs of all breeds in competition. In this sport, dogs are encouraged to run the length of a dock and leap into an adjacent pool of water, competing for either height or distance. The sport also offers physical therapy benefits for aging dogs or dogs suffering from pain and inflammation.

For the past nine years, canine aquatics competitions have taken place at the Missouri River Outdoor Expo at Ponca State Park. One of 100 interactive activities attracted by the yearly event, it joins outdoor endeavors such as archery and tomahawk throwing, shooting sports and bladesmithing, fishing and kayaking, obstacle course scaling and rock climbing, Monarch butterfly tagging and women's axe hurling.

With tens of thousands on hand for the Expo each year, many of them families, Dock Diving was a perfect fit in the Expo, according to Jeff Fields, coordinating well with other events in which dogs swiftly go after frisbees and flyballs. Fields is the Parks Division Administrator for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, overseeing 78 park areas statewide.

Over the years, SplashDogs® and DockDogs® have been invited to set up a competition stage at the Expo. Whether Spaniels or Labs, Foxhounds or Pointers, competitors take part, although in the beginning years, Labrador Retrievers were the waterfowl hunting, duck dogs to shine in the sport.



Here's how it works. A 40-foot dock is situated next to a large, inflatable pool of water. Dogs wait on this dock along with their handler, a dock on which they will race along and jump into the water to retrieve a throw toy tossed into the water, motivating dogs into rapid momentum and the best launch angle possible.

DockDogs® sets up competition in four different disciplines. Big Air is a long jump in which the distance is judged from the end of the dock, where the dog takes off, to where the tail end of the dog breaks the water's surface.

The second event is high jump for the dogs, known as the Extreme Vertical. The dog jumps up into the air over the water to grab a bumper toy extended out eight feet from the end of the dock. Beginning with a height of four foot six inches, the bumper toy is lifted in two-inch increments as competition progresses.

The third event is called the Speed Retrieve, a timed contest. A bumper toy is suspended at the far end of the pool with a starting indicator light above it. Once the light turns green, the dog is released by its handler and the time clock stops when the dog has pulled the toy from a Speed



Left: Handlers toss out a throw toy for dogs to retrieve at canine aquatics events, such as this one at Ponca State Park.

Top left: Four-legged athletes compete against each other at the Wisner Junior Livestock Show in DockDogs® events.

Top right: Spectators round the arena to watch as canine competitors leap from a 40-foot dock in the Big Air division to retrieve a throw toy tossed by their handlers.

Retrieve bracket.

And then there's the Iron Dog Challenge which incorporates the best run in all three of the DockDogs® disciplines, recognizing the boldest, best and most daring dogs.

Similar events set up throughout the Midwest qualify canine competitors and their handlers for national titles.

DockDogs® competitions also take place at the Junior Livestock Show in Wisner, Nebraska, similar to events in Minnesota, Wyoming, North Dakota, Colorado, South Dakota and Ohio, to name a few states from the country's mid-section.

Amidst food vendors, pens for sheep, goats, dairy and beef cattle, pony rides and chainsaw wood carvers, DockDogs® sets up its dock and pool for competition. Handlers' dog pens rest in shady spots provided by wide-reaching cottonwood trees nearby.

Canines with names like Donkey, Chips, Rooster, Rambo and even a poodle with the handle of Downtown Henry have been among the contestants, some of them world champions in DockDogs® competitions, and world

record setters in Dueling Dogs, a type of drag racing for dogs.

"There are lots of events in Minnesota, and some in the west," explained participant Tom Dropik of Minnesota. "The East Coast is saturated with them."

Dropik has taken part in duck dog competitions since watching the sport on ESPN's Great Outdoor Games, knowing he owned a dog that loved the water. Dropik went on to become a top innovator in the sport of Dock Jumping, developing training techniques and education standards for the new sport.

During competitions, a DockDogs® announcer reads reaction times and overall distances, as spectators round the event on sun-baked bleachers. These spectators include not only those who want to learn more about Canine Aquatics or compete against each other but also those who breed dogs to sell to rival contenders.

According to Dropik, these include dogs with high energy and drive, dogs that are lean and strong. Contestants that really dive into the sport—those that jump high and swim far.

Home fires remain the most common disaster in the United States, yet many Americans underestimate their risk. The American Red Cross responded to more than 74,000 disasters last year, with a staggering 93 percent being fire-related. These numbers continue to rise, highlighting the urgent need for increased awareness and preparedness.

The prevalence of home fires has increased by eight percent since 2000, with the American Red Cross responding to 10 percent more fires today than just six years ago. The financial impact is significant as well, with the average home fire costing more than \$17,000 in 2006. Despite these alarming statistics, 80 percent of Americans are unaware that home fires are the most common disaster nationwide.

One of the most concerning aspects of home fires is the lack of preparedness among families. Only 26 percent have developed and practiced a home fire escape plan, putting many lives at unnecessary risk. Fires claim more lives annually than all natural disasters combined, affecting individuals from all backgrounds and geographic locations. In 2006, a home fire was reported every 80 seconds, and someone lost their life to a fire every 204 minutes.



Certain demographics are disproportionately affected. Children under five and adults over 65 are more than twice as likely to die in a home fire compared to the general population.

The leading cause of home fires is cooking-related incidents, with

two-thirds originating from the range or stove. Heating fires follow as the second leading cause, while smoking remains the leading cause of fire-related deaths.

Prevention and preparedness measures can significantly reduce fire-related casualties. Installing both smoke alarms and sprinkler systems can lower the risk of dying in a home fire by 82 percent. Additionally, carbon monoxide, a silent killer, claims over 200 lives annually due to faulty fuel-burning appliances, including furnaces, water heaters, and room heaters.

Home fires are a growing crisis, but with increased awareness, preventative measures, and preparedness, lives can be saved. Families should take immediate action by installing smoke alarms, maintaining heating and cooking appliances, and creating a fire escape plan. By taking these steps, we can reduce the devastating impact of home fires and protect our communities from unnecessary tragedy.

Murphy



From Page 5

Managing the New Load

The District must manage the infrastructure challenges, but also must consider how the new load fits into the District's current load pattern. To manage growth more effectively, some Districts introduce programs that encourage customers to reduce their energy consumption during peak periods. These programs can help reduce the overall peak demand, thus slowing the need for additional infrastructure expansion. This demand side management works to increase the load factor of the District, increasing the efficiency of the overall system.

Benefits across the District

As more electricity is consumed,

utilities have more billing units. These billing units equate to more overall revenue. In this context, load growth can be seen as a financial boon, allowing Districts to recover operational costs more efficiently and lower the overall burden on the remaining customers.

Furthermore, sustained growth in electricity consumption over time can help utilities recover the costs of large-scale infrastructure upgrades, such as new substations, expensive maintenance projects or technology investments. These investments often involve significant capital expenditures but can be easily justified and paid off by spreading the cost over more billing units.

In Summary

The new load growth comes with

challenges including planning, construction and the overall burden on the electric grid. There is financial risk with new electric load and a fair proportion of the District's costs must be assigned to the new load. After careful consideration of all these factors, load growth can propel the District to new levels of financial strength and reduce rate pressure. This also can be leveraged for system improvements and upgraded technology to increase reliability for all customers.

Public Power will carefully navigate through times of growth like we are seeing now and be cautious in times when there is none. Public Power in Nebraska has looked for the best interest of all our customers for many years and will continue to do so in the future.



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When your local electric utility talks about “beat the peak,” it is a call to action for energy consumers to reduce electricity use during periods of highest demand. Using less energy during peak times can ease the strain on the electric grid, benefit your electric utility and sometimes lower your electric bill.

Electricity generation and energy supply must match consumption in real time to ensure safe, reliable power. Every moment of every day, an entire workforce monitors energy use, adjusting power plant production up or down as needed to keep the grid balanced.

As energy demand grows, all of us can do our part to use less. To put this in perspective, peak electricity demand is expected to increase by 38 gigawatts over the next four years, according to the Energy Information Administration. That’s like adding another California to our nation’s power grid.

Peak time varies for each electric utility but typically occurs in the morning when people get ready for the day and in the evening when they return home from work and school. During these times, we turn on lights, cook, adjust the thermostat, run the dishwasher and do laundry—to name just a few energy-consuming activities.

Typically, the price of power increases when demand is higher. Reducing your electric use during peak times can help lower market prices for everyone and lessen stress on the electric grid.

Public power districts and electric cooperatives set electric rates to cover costs. Some utilities have time-of-use rates that reflect higher costs during peak demand periods. Whether you have time-of-use rates or not, these tips can help keep costs down for your utility and establish off-peak energy habits.



Instead of running the dishwasher right after you load it, use the delay start setting so it runs overnight.

*Photograph by Mark Gilliland,
Pioneer Utility Resources*

As a general rule, I try to spread out my use of equipment and appliances. For example, I avoid washing dishes and clothes, and cooking all at the same time. Running a lot of hot water will cause your water heater to use more energy, too.

Increasing the energy efficiency of your home can lower its impact on the grid. Weatherize windows and doors and add insulation to improve the comfort of your home. You can also consider upgrading to energy efficient appliances or using energy-saving features on your existing appliances.

If you haven’t already, switch your incandescent lighting to LEDs, which use at least 75% less electricity and last up to 25 times longer, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. There are many affordable options on the market.

Schedule your dishwasher run time. My dishwasher, which is several years old, has a “delay start” button. This is also handy if your dishwasher is loud. Setting it to start after you go to bed shifts that energy consumption to off-peak hours, and you don’t have to hear it.

Running your washing machine and dryer during off-peak hours can help, too. If you’re in the market for a new washer or dryer, look for a model with a high Integrated Modified Energy Factor and a low Integrated Water Factor to save water and energy.

Also, consider switching your charging habits for all devices to off-peak hours. If you have an electric vehicle, use the scheduled charge settings. You’ll plug in your vehicle when you get home, and it will start charging automatically during the off-peak hours you choose.

Small changes at home can make a big difference to the energy grid. Incorporate these energy-wise habits into your daily routine.



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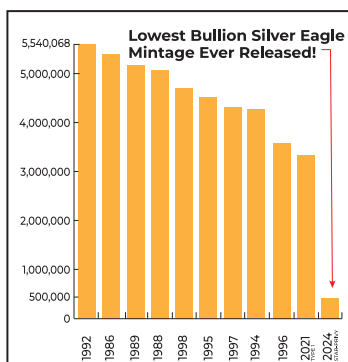
Two, collectors also GO CRAZY for low mintage coins, the lower the better. And the Star Privy Silver Eagle not only has a low mintage. It's the lowest mintage bullion Silver Eagle EVER!

First-Ever Privy-Marked Bullion Silver Eagle

Privy marks are small symbols added to coin, oftentimes to commemorate special occasions and/or historic events. In this case, the US Mint has added a "star" to the Silver Eagle to celebrate the release of a new mobile gaming app, 8th Era, a groundbreaking new mobile gaming app that marries gaming with coin collecting to inspire the next generation of collectors. It's an instant "must-have" for Silver Eagle collectors.

Lowest Mintage Bullion Silver Eagle EVER

Not only is the Star Privy Silver Eagle the first ever privy-marked bullion Silver Eagle, it's also the lowest mintage bullion Silver Eagle ever! How low? It's not even close!



Consider this...the 1996 Silver Eagle is the lowest mintage with 3,603,386 coins made. The Star Privy Silver Eagle has a mintage of only 500,000 coins. That's SEVEN TIMES LOWER. Just look at the graph for perspective.

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HOMETOWN EATS

GOODY'S GRILL BATTLE CREEK, NEB.

In the small town of Battle Creek, Nebraska — population 1,200 — there's a little restaurant with a big following. Goody's Grill isn't just where locals go for a good meal — it's where they go to feel at home.

For nearly two decades, Mike and Sandy Goodwater have poured their hearts (and plenty of hard work) into Goody's Grill. When the couple bought the restaurant 18 years ago, it came with a lot of history — and a lot of needed repairs.

When the Goodwaters bought the place, it needed more than just a little TLC. "We needed to give it a facelift," Mike says. So, they gutted the aging restaurant and rebuilt it from the ground up — transforming it into the warm, welcoming space it is today.

Mike runs the kitchen — and just about everything else. He cooks the food, cleans the dining room, handles the books, and fixes whatever breaks. Sandy, who works full-time elsewhere, helps out front whenever she can. It's very much a family affair — both their daughters grew up working at the restaurant before leaving for Lincoln.

What keeps people coming back? It's simple, really: good food made right. The Chicken Fried Steak is famous, the onion rings are hand-breaded for every order, and the Prime Rib on weekends draws diners from miles away. Daily lunch specials keep regulars happy, and there's always a friendly face behind the counter.

But Goody's isn't just about what's on the plate. Mike has built lasting relationships in the community, including with the Elkhorn Rural Public Power District. He caters their board meetings and even opens the restaurant outside normal hours if their crews are working through an outage. "Whatever it takes to take care of them," he says.



A family friend decorates Goody's Grill for every season, filling the space with handmade touches — including stained glass pieces — that change four times a year. It's just one more reason the restaurant feels like home.

With a staff of 20 and open Tuesday through Saturday for lunch and supper, Goody's Grill is the kind of place every small town hopes to have. It's built on hard work, good food, and genuine care for the people who walk through the door — whether they're neighbors from down the street or visitors from out of town.



For the past 18 years, Mike (above) and Sandy Goodwater have owned and operated Goody's Grill, located in Battle Creek, Neb.



Cheesy Meatball Bombs

- 1 puff pastry sheet
- 12 thawed meatballs
- 1 package (8 ounces) shredded mozzarella cheese
- Marinara sauce, for serving
- Buffalo sauce, for serving
- Barbecue sauce, for serving

Heat oven to 425 F.

Use rolling pin to thin out puff pastry then cut into 12 squares.

Place one meatball in each square with cheese. Close pastries around cheese and meatballs. For visible meatballs, leave hole on top of pastries. Place each ball in hole of muffin tin.

Bake 10-15 minutes. Pastry should be golden brown. Remove from pan and serve with marinara, Buffalo and barbecue dipping sauces.

Tip: Recipe can be doubled or tripled, as needed.

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"

Reader Submitted Recipes

French Toast Bake

- 1/2 cup melted butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Bread

Melt butter and add brown sugar, stir. Put in bottom of a 9" X 13" pan. Lay slices of bread on top. Mix together eggs, milk and vanilla, then pour half of the mixture on bread, then lay another layer of bread on top pouring the rest of the mixture on top. Cover and chill in the refrigerator overnight. In the morning bake in 350-degree oven for 45 minutes. You can sprinkle powdered sugar and cinnamon on top to serve.

Elizabeth Poss, Scotia, Nebraska

Chinese Chicken Salad

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 2 lbs. Napa cabbage, cut up | carrots (uncooked) |
| 4 chicken breasts cooked and cut up (I marinate mine in Italian Dressing then cook on grill) | Red and Green pepper to taste |
| 5 green onions cut up | Salad dressing: |
| 2 Top Ramen packages (uncooked) Oriental Flavor - use seasonings for dressing | 3/4 cup canola oil |
| 1/2 cup slivered almonds | 1/4 cup sugar (can use Splenda) |
| 1 16 oz. frozen peas and | 6 Tablespoons rice vinegar |
| | Both packages of Oriental seasoning |

Toss salad with dressing many times and chill. Break up noodles over salad before tossing again and serving. This makes a large salad.

Merschon Franssen, Ameila, Nebraska

S'more's Pie

- 1 package graham crackers
- 1 package marshmallows
- 4 bars of chocolate or Reese's Peanut Butter Cups

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Use a 9" X 9" cast iron pan. Place chocolate bars or Reese's Peanut Butter Cups on the bottom of the pan, then layer marshmallows on top. Put pan in the oven for 12 minutes or until marshmallows are puffed up and lightly browned. When it has cooled, break graham cracker squares into 4 pieces and line them up along the inside of the pan, so it's like a dip. Enjoy!

Clair Morten, Kearney, Nebraska



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