

# NEBRASKA

Magazine

August 2024



## PAPER MOON PASTRIES

Inside Cortland's Vintage Pastry Shop

Baseload and Intermittent Power

A Guide to Electric Vehicle Ownership

Discover the Benefits of Heat Pumps



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*Telling the story of  
Rural Nebraska*

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*Lindsey Oelling and her best friend, Sean Flattery, greet customers of Paper Moon Pastries in Cortland, Nebraska. Photograph by Susan Barnard*



Wayne Price

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## From Light Bulbs to Audits: How to Boost Your Home's Energy Efficiency

Let's face it, electricity is a huge part of our daily lives. From flipping on the lights, firing up the computer, cooking dinner, to keeping our food cold, we rely on it for just about everything. But every time we turn on another device, that electric meter outside starts spinning faster, and our monthly bill creeps a little higher.

When that electric bill arrives each month, do you ever wonder if there's a way to cut down on your family's electricity usage? Well, the good news is, there absolutely is!

The first step is diving into the world of energy conservation and efficiency. While these two terms are related, they aren't quite the same.

Conservation is all about reducing the total amount of electricity you use. It's as simple as turning off lights, appliances, and gadgets when you're not using them.

Energy efficiency, on the other hand, means upgrading or changing things in your life so they use less electricity but still give you the same benefits. Think of things like swapping out old light bulbs for LEDs, investing in energy-efficient appliances, or adding better insulation to your home.

To get a clear picture of how much electricity your home uses, consider getting a home energy audit. Many of the public power districts and electric cooperatives across Nebraska offer this service for free.

In addition to an examination of the home, a home energy professional may use equipment such as blower doors, infrared cameras, gas leak and carbon monoxide detectors, moisture meters, and non-toxic smoke pens.

Once you have the audit results, you can start making changes to boost your home's energy efficiency. These small steps can collectively make a big impact on reducing electricity demand and might even lower overall costs for electric systems and their consumers. Plus, energy efficiency helps manage the growth in electricity demand and can delay the need for new power generation facilities.

Making energy conservation and efficiency part of our daily lives is a crucial first step. While our energy consumption will inevitably rise, using electricity more efficiently can help slow down the overall demand for more power.

So, let's take action today. Every small change adds up to a big difference!



Jayson Bishop

Jayson Bishop is the General Manager of the Midwest Electric Cooperative Corporation, headquartered in Grant, Neb.

## Leadership in Action: The Impact of Local Boards in Rural Nebraska

Being from rural Nebraska, most of us are probably familiar with many different kinds of oversight boards. Many of you are probably on at least one board yourself, whether that's the fair board, school board, Natural Resource District board, church board or any of dozens of others. Part of what makes rural America so strong is the dedication of the residents to working together for the betterment of the community.

But the role of a board varies significantly based on what kind of organization that board is tasked with overseeing. For a small organization – such as a fair board, church board or cemetery board – the board itself may be doing the lion's share of the work. They have to do all the planning and organizing and then also be the ones who are putting that plan into action. For a larger organization – such as an NRD board, school board or the board of a cooperative or public power district – the board has more of an administrative function. It is the board's responsibility to set the overall direction of the organization including hiring the top management, approving the budget, creating policies and setting the priorities to focus on while entrusting the execution and implementation of those directives to the management and employees.

The primary purpose of a board is to act as a trustee on behalf of the people they are elected to represent. Their main purpose is to make sure that decisions made and actions taken are in the best interests of the people the organization is tasked with serving. All other roles and responsibilities for the board should be a result of trying to accomplish that mission.

A board should be involved in planning the goals and objectives of the organization. That can involve immediate and short-term goals such as making decisions on specific issues and creating new policies or adjusting policies to new circumstances. And that also involves larger and more long-term goals as might be determined as part of a strategic plan or preparing for a large building project. Once the board makes those decisions and chooses the path for the organization, they should trust that the management and employees will carry out those directives while the board maintains oversight.

The board also needs to work to ensure that the organization has the resources it needs to accomplish those tasks. Electric cooperatives and public power districts are similar in that the primary source of funding is rates charged to members/customers, but they are different in that PPDs have bonding authority to acquire funding for large capital projects while

**Continued on Page 13**

# Paper Moon Pastries

If you drive down main street of Cortland, Nebraska on any given Saturday morning you will find a steady line out the door of Paper Moon Pastries, located just off Highway 77 between Lincoln and Beatrice. Its owner, Lindsey Oelling of Cortland, opened the 1930's vintage-style pastry and coffee shop in May of 2022.

Oelling, a licensed mental health therapist, said she's always had the dream of owning her own pastry shop and has always loved baking, something that she did throughout her life with her grandma as well as her parents, Kent (the cookie master) and Lori (the pie baker) Oelling. Lindsey had a vision for her venture. She wanted to create a place in the small town of Cortland, less than 500 people, where people could meet for a sweet treat, have a place to slow down and connect. So she rolled up her sleeves and went to work, refurbishing an old hair salon on main street.

A visit to Paper Moon Pastries certainly takes you back in time the minute you step inside. Oelling and her staff of six are dressed in clothing that gives off the 1930's vibe. In addition to the amazing baking smells that overtake your senses upon entering, big band, American style jazz and 1930's swing music plays in the background. Oelling herself greets every single guest that enters, inquiring where they are from and what their plans are for the day. The



dining area contains booths and tables where patrons can stay and visit while enjoying one of the homemade goodies over a cup of coffee. A hand-painted mural by Lindsey herself covers one wall. Inspired by her favorite movie, "It's Only a Paper Moon," Oelling recalls watching with her father the 1973 American comedy-drama film set in Kansas and Missouri during the Great Depression. "Growing up, Dad and I loved going on road trips in search of diners, ice cream and antiques," said Lindsey. Her love for history, baking, movies and old cars

can be attributed to those road trips and time spent with her dad.

The very first Saturday she opened back in 2022, she had no idea what the response would be. She baked 100 cinnamon rolls, a couple of cakes, a tray of cupcakes and a few batches of cookies. Her best friend, Sean Flattery, served coffee and Lindsey stood at the old-fashioned bakery display counter. And within 2 hours they were out of everything.

Fast forward to 2024. It's another Saturday morning and there's a line

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*Top left: A line of customers wait patiently on Cortland's main street to enter Paper Moon Pastries for a sweet treat.*

*Top right: Lindsey Oelling and her mom, Lori, serve up warm cinnamon rolls on a busy Saturday morning.*

*Left: Norris Public Power customers from Odell, Angie McMurray, Laurie Vitosh and Jennifer Warren, make their selections from the bakery counter.*

## From Page 6

out the door and down main street Cortland. Over 700 kolaches were baked for the day, along with over 500 homemade cinnamon rolls, pecan rolls, coffee cake, cupcakes, sour cream raisin and strawberry rhubarb pies, rice Krispie bars, cookies and more.

A customer orders two cinnamon rolls. Lindsey's mom, Lori, takes the pan fresh out of a warm oven and places them on plates to serve. Lindsey and her staff are a well-oiled machine. Everyone knows their tasks, takeout boxes continue to be made as the steady pace of customers keep coming in the door. Three seniors from Norris High School are busy doing dishes, serving guests and refilling the display counter at the front of the store. Nearly all of the baked goods found at Paper Moon Pastries are gluten free and dairy free, a rare find for those who require special dietary conditions.

Everything prepared at Paper Moon Pastries is handmade from scratch.

Recently Paper Moon Pastries hosted a Savory Sunday, and served over 750 bierocks, a handheld and savory, beef-filled pastry featuring cabbage, onion, cheese and juicy ground beef. Oelling said she feels like she's living her dream life, combining her artistic freedom with baking while having fun. "It doesn't feel like work to me," said Oelling. "I've gotten to know so many local people from Cortland with my business," she continued.

This fall, Paper Moon Pastries will be hosting their third annual fall festival and Once In a Blue Moon car show on main street of Cortland on October 12th from 8am to 3pm.

There will be live bands, car show, a makers market featuring handmade items from 70 vendors, beer garden and chili contest. Paper Moon will be providing free cinnamon rolls to go along with the chili.

Paper Moon Pastries has numerous social media platforms that Oelling creates the content and updates on a regular basis, including a Facebook page, Instagram, Tik Tok and website, [www.papermoonpastries.com](http://www.papermoonpastries.com).

The bakery, located at 325 West 4th Street in Cortland, is only open on Saturdays from 7am to 2pm and it's best to get there early.



*Top: Lindsey Oelling greets customers of Paper Moon Pastries in Cortland, Nebraska.*

*Above: Seating area of the bakery includes a hand painted mural by Oelling.*



## Essential Tips for a Safer Home

By Larry Oetken



Did you know that faulty home electrical wiring is behind 26,000 residential fires every year in the U.S.? That's not just a statistic; it's a real threat causing hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries. Often, we don't

address these hazards until it's too late. Follow these straightforward tips to help you spot and fix these potential dangers before they become a problem.

### Inspect Your Outlets

First off, take a look at your electrical outlets. Loose plugs can lead to shocks or even start fires. If you notice any missing or broken wall plates, replace them right away to keep the inner wiring safely covered.

### Child-Proof Your Home

Got kids at home? Make sure to use safety covers on unused outlets. Better yet, consider installing tamper-resistant receptacles. These come with built-in shutters to

prevent curious little ones from inserting small objects.

### Check Your Cords

Take a stroll around your home and inspect the cords of your appliances. Look for any that are frayed, cracked, or damaged. Ensure they're not tucked under rugs or carpets, draped over furniture, or placed in high-traffic areas. And definitely don't nail or staple cords to walls or floors.

### Use Extension Cords Wisely

Extension cords should only be a temporary fix. If you find yourself relying on them regularly, it's time to get more outlets installed. When you do use them, make sure they have safety closures to protect children from shocks or burns.

Taking these precautions can make a world of difference in keeping your home safe from electrical hazards. Stay vigilant and proactive, and you can prevent potential disasters before they start.

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

## Safety Tip

**Before beginning an outdoor project, always look out for overhead power lines. Use extra caution when carrying a ladder or removing debris from gutters. Keep yourself and ladder far away- at least ten feet in all directions, at all times- from power lines, including service lines.**



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# A Guide to Electric Vehicle Ownership

The automotive industry is undergoing a transformative shift as many consumers are making the switch to electric vehicles. Electric vehicles, or EVs, offer numerous benefits, from environmental sustainability to cost savings.

Transitioning to an EV requires careful consideration of multiple factors. The following list overviews key aspects of EV ownership and can help you make an informed decision based on your specific needs.

**EV Knowledge:** Familiarize yourself with EV basics. Understand the differences between Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV), Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV) and Fuel Cell Electric Vehicles (FCEV). Consider your daily, monthly and annual driving needs and evaluate each option.

**Driving Range:** Evaluate the EV's driving range when fully charged to ensure it aligns with your daily commute. We often think about a summer road trip for our driving needs, but it's important to remember there are other options for infrequent, long-distance travel.

**Home Charging:** Determine if you will need to install a Level 2 charger and if your home's electrical system is compatible. By evaluating your whole home energy use, you can determine if electrical panel upgrades are necessary for a Level 2 system. Level 1 chargers typically do not require upgrades.

**Public Charging Options:** Research the availability of public charging stations along your typical routes.

**Cost Comparisons:** Compare EV prices from multiple dealerships. Sticker prices are higher upfront, but EVs have proven to be cost effective due to reduced maintenance and fuel costs

**Financial Incentives:** Explore federal, state and local incentives available for EV purchases. Check with your public power district or electric co-op to see if they offer incentives or special rates for EVs.

**Maintenance:** EVs typically require less maintenance than conventional vehicles, which can lead to long-term savings. EVs have far fewer moving parts than combustion-engine vehicles, resulting in a streamlined maintenance experience.

**Battery Warranty:** Ensure the EV battery includes a



substantial warranty. Most manufacturers offer eight-year warranties (or up to 100,000 miles). If you're considering managed charging or bi-direction power flow (V2X) programs, take these warranties into account. V2X programs facilitate a bi-directional power flow between EVs and the power grid, which is highly beneficial for co-op members who own an EV. These programs allow EV owners to sell power back to the grid during periods of high electricity demand. Participation in these programs may impact your vehicle's warranty, so it's recommended to consult the warranty documentation before participating in a V2X program.

**Insurance Implications:** Consult with your insurance provider to review potential changes to your policy when owning an EV.

**Fees:** Some plug-in electric vehicles are subject to additional fees to compensate for road tax revenue that is typically collected from gasoline taxes. Additionally,

*Determine if you will need to install a Level 2 charger and if your home's electrical system is compatible.  
Photograph provided by Ford*



you may have to pay a higher vehicle registration fee for EVs and hybrid vehicles. It's important to be aware of these potential fees when considering the total cost of ownership for an EV.

EV ownership offers many benefits. EVs often have fewer restrictions in High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, allowing for quicker commutes. EVs are exempt from certain inspections due to their lack of an internal combustion engine, and they require no oil changes, leading to lower maintenance costs. And owning an EV is a fun experience—drivers can enjoy a fast-accelerating, quieter ride.

If you're interested in an EV, reach out to your public power district or electric co-op. Many rural electric utilities offer "ride and drive" events, home charging programs and more, allowing members to gain firsthand experience and determine if an EV is right for them.



## BEVs a.k.a. EVs

Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) (also known as EVs) do not rely on any gasoline to run and have zero tailpipe emissions. EV operators plug their vehicles into their home electric grid or a public charging station to charge. BEVs also generate electricity from braking, similar to HEVs, and use this as a secondary energy source.



## PLUG-INS

Plug-in hybrid EVs run on both battery power and gasoline and have much smaller battery packs than BEVs. The all-battery range in these vehicles is typically between five and 30 miles, and then the internal combustion engine is responsible for anything beyond that. Plug-in hybrids reduce emissions for short trips around town; longer trips are powered by gasoline.

# Say Goodbye to Noisy, Inefficient Bathroom Fans

By Cory Fuehrer, NPPD Energy Efficiency Program Manager

Walk into your bathroom, turn on the light and fan, and the first thing you think about is energy efficiency, right? Well, probably not. However, your bathroom's exhaust system could be letting you down. Many homes have bathroom fans that:

- are too noisy
- move little air
- are not energy efficient
- may cause backdraft

So, how can you avoid these pitfalls? First, identify what size of fan you need. Fan size is usually rated in the amount of air it can move in terms of cubic feet per minute (CFM). Most experts recommend eight air changes per hour for bathrooms. Determine your bathroom's volume by calculating cubic feet. You can do this by multiplying length by width by ceiling height. Take the cubic feet and divide by 60, which is the number of minutes in an hour. Now multiply by eight, which is the targeted number of air changes. For example, a 10'x8' bathroom with an 8' high ceiling would need 85 CFM. When shopping, round up to the nearest size.

Next, choose the quietest, most energy-efficient fan in the size range required. Most fan labels have Home Ventilating Institute (HVI) ratings so you can compare noise levels, as well as their energy efficiency. Fan noise is rated in "sones." The lower the sone rating, the quieter the fan. Efficiency can be compared by how many CFM of air a fan moves per watt of electricity the fan requires. The best fans have sound ratings of 0.5 sones or less and move about 2½ CFM of air per watt. For added assurance of quality and efficiency, look for the EnergyStar label.

Third, select low-resistance (smooth) exhaust ducting. Seal the joints and insulate sections that run through unheated spaces. This will help maintain the fan's air volume rating while reducing the amount of heat gained or lost while the fan is not operating. Undersized or droopy flex ducting and ineffective or dirty backdraft dampers and exhaust louvers can cut rated airflow by more than 50%.

Also, duct the exhaust air to where it will not cause moisture damage. Many times, this requires ducting to the outdoors.



*An exhaust fan can eliminate moisture and odors in the bathroom and ensure comfort in your home. Photograph provided by Akicon*

Remember, if you have combustion appliances, such as natural gas or propane water heaters or gas furnaces or fireplaces, backdraft may be a concern. Because fans can potentially create a negative pressure in your living space, they may cause the combustion appliance exhaust to back up into the indoor environment. Not only should you ensure this will not happen by installing sealed-combustion appliances, but it is always a good idea to have a working carbon monoxide detector in use for an extra layer of safety.

Fifth, install proper controls. Bathroom fans connected to light switches start running when the light is turned on. Often, users turn the light "off" before all the moisture is exhausted after a bath or shower. Meanwhile, use of a separate fan toggle switch often leaves the fan running longer than necessary. Instead, use a timer switch with a maximum of 60 minutes. This should keep the fan running for at least 10 minutes after you leave the room to remove excess humidity.

Following these simple steps will help you save energy and confirm installation of a quality, energy efficient bathroom fan that will provide you years of service.

# Campus Safety 101: Essential Electrical Tips for Dorm Living

When preparing for your child's return to campus, shopping for dorm room supplies, décor, and snacks is an exciting part of the process. However, before the hugs and goodbyes, it's crucial to have a conversation about electrical safety.

Here are some essential tips to help keep your college student safe in their new home:

- When shopping for items that run on electricity, look for a safety endorsement label, such as UL (Underwriters Laboratories).
- Do not put a cell phone under a pillow or bedding. It could overheat or catch fire.
- In the dorm or apartment, make sure outlets near water sources are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). If they are not, contact the resident assistant, campus

housing staff or landlord. (Look for a test and reset button on the face of the outlet.)

- Use power strips with an over-current protector that will shut off power if too much current is drawn.

- Avoid overloading extension cords, power strips or outlets.
- Advise against hanging decorative lights with nails or tacks. Instead, use plastic hooks to avoid damaging the wires and creating a fire risk.

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## Guest Editorial

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cooperatives likely use loan funds. In either case, the board would need to select and approve the right mix of funding sources to meet the organization's needs while complying with financial goals and maintaining a healthy financial position.

The most effective organizations have healthy relationship between a well-informed and involved board and management and employees who also have the best interests of the organization in mind as they seek to carry out direction of the board in an efficient and effective manner.

Register today at  
[www.nreda.org](http://www.nreda.org)



# The Difference Between Baseload and Intermittent Power And why it matters in Nebraska

It's one of those excruciating days when the warm air becomes unbearable. You crank up the air conditioner on the way home from work, and the first thing you do when you get home is turn the thermostat down a couple degrees.

Throughout your area and the entire region, thousands of other people are responding the same way. Every air conditioner and fan start working at full speed to keep everyone cool and comfortable. The end of the workday creates a massive surge in the amount of electricity needed to meet the demand, and it's up to the people who oversee the operation of North America's power grid to make sure there's an adequate amount to keep you comfortable.

It's a challenging task because the amount of electricity that's needed varies throughout each day. While you and your neighbors are asleep, the demand is lower, but as everyone wakes up, turns on the shower, and starts the coffeemaker, the demand for power climbs quickly.

Our electric grid gathers and distributes power from many sources, including power plants that convert fossil fuels like coal, natural gas and oil into electricity; nuclear power plants; and renewable energy sources, such as wind turbines, solar farms, hydroelectric dams and even landfills. The electricity supplied from all of these sources is categorized as baseload, peaking or intermediate power.

Baseload power accounts for most of the electricity we use. Always-available power sources are designed to constantly generate large amounts of power, so you and everyone else is assured of a reliable supply of electricity whenever you need it. The most familiar examples of baseload sources are nuclear and fossil-fuel power plants, along with some hydroelectric and geothermal facilities. While baseload plants provide an affordable and dependable source of power, they're not engineered to keep up with sudden changes in electricity demand. The companies operating them are unable to turn them on or off quickly.

When the demand for electricity shifts—either



gradually or suddenly—grid operators turn to either intermediate or peaking power plants. These plants are designed to startup quickly and adapt their power output to meet the varying demand. In most cases, peaking plants supply more frequent and sudden changes, whereas intermediate plants supply more gradual or slower changes.

Renewable power sources such as solar and wind farms are increasingly used to supply electricity. Both sources provide intermittent power since the amount of electricity generated and the time at which electricity is generated depend upon cooperation from nature. Solar panels can't generate electricity when there's not enough sunlight, and large wind turbines generally don't produce power until the wind speed reaches at least 13 miles per hour. Because intermittent power sources like



*Our electric grid gathers and distributes power from many sources, including power plants like Gerald Gentleman Station (left) that convert fossil fuels like coal into electricity; nuclear power plants; and renewable energy sources, such as wind turbines, (below) solar farms, hydroelectric dams and even landfills.*



wind and solar depend on unpredictable weather conditions, they can't be relied upon to deliver predictable and constant baseload power. This is why changes in electricity demand are usually met with intermediate or peaking generation powered by more traditional sources like natural gas.

Electric consumers who are concerned about climate change may wonder why power suppliers aren't rushing to replace fuels such as coal and natural gas with environmentally-friendlier alternatives like wind and solar. If rural electric utilities switched completely to intermittent sources, they wouldn't be able to meet consumers' needs for reliable power.

One promising technology involves the development of energy storage devices such as batteries that can be used to store excess power generated by wind and solar

so it's available even when the weather isn't cooperating. While that technology is advancing, it's still evolving, and large-scale use of such batteries is many years away. Batteries also require large amounts of elements such as lithium that must be mined, creating additional environmental concerns.

While public power districts and electric co-ops are working hard to shift to environmentally-friendlier sources, the realities of differing power needs are why most maintain a diverse mix of energy sources and fuels. Rural electric utility members can help by taking steps to reduce their own energy use. For example, switching to more-efficient lighting and appliances will not only reduce your monthly electric bill, but it can reduce the amount of electricity that's needed.

Contact your local electric utility to learn more about practical ways you can use less electricity without sacrificing comfort and convenience. The less power we all use, the less the power producers will have to generate.

School buses are the safest way for students to get to school, but part of that safety depends on the other vehicles around them.

New teen drivers may encounter school buses on the road for the first time in the coming weeks and will need to be prepared. In order to keep themselves and bus passengers safe, your teen must know how to drive around school buses, when to slow down for them and when to stop.

Here are some tips your teen should know about sharing the road with school buses.

### Watch for students

School buses are specially designed to protect their riders, but when you see a school bus you are also likely to see students getting on and off of it. Young children can be unpredictable road users, so your teen must be on the lookout for students walking, biking and crossing the road, both in and out of crosswalks.

This is especially important if your

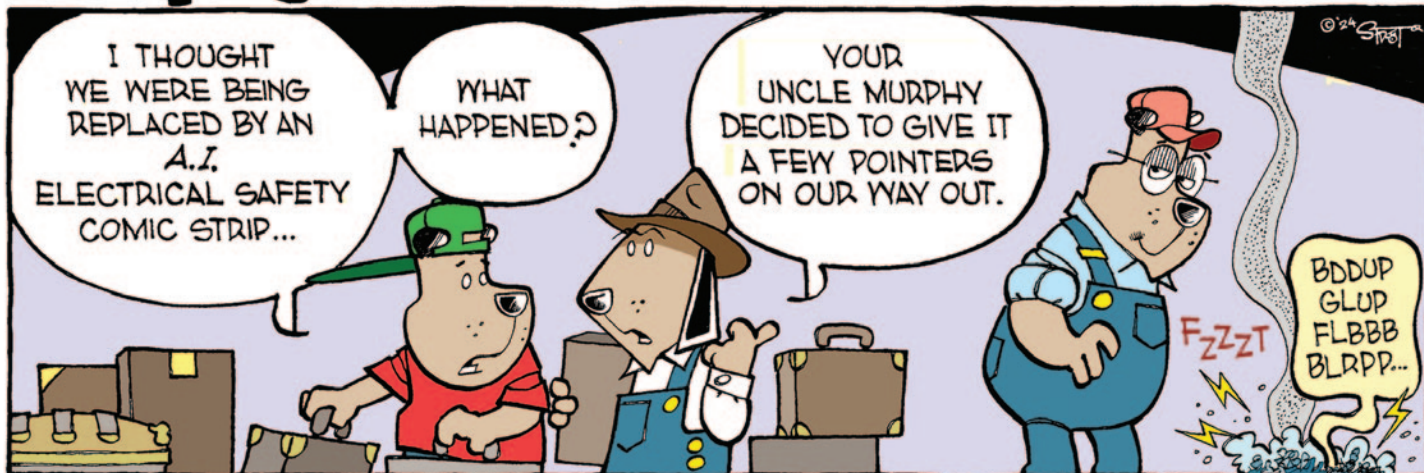


teen is backing out of a driveway or another area with a limited view. Neighborhood bus stops can be busy areas but they may not be clearly marked. It is up to every driver to keep an eye out for pedestrians and anticipate their actions.

### Listen to the bus

Bus drivers can have a lot to say in order to keep their passengers safe and everyone behind the wheel needs to be listening. According to NHTSA, two of the most common messages from bus drivers are given through flashing yellow lights and

## Murphy





flashing red lights.

The flashing yellow lights mean the vehicle is preparing to stop, likely to pick up or drop off students. When your teen sees these lights, they must prepare to stop, as well. The flashing red lights are paired with an extended stop arm on the bus and indicate that the bus has stopped and students are getting on or off. These lights and this stop arm mean that your teen must come to a complete stop and wait in order to keep students safe.

Your state may have additional or unique laws about driving near school buses, so take some time to review them with your teen. A larger roadway with multiple lanes on each side, for example, might or might not require drivers to stop when a bus has stopped in the opposite direction.

### When in doubt, be cautious

New driving situations can be confusing and stressful for teens, but the best way to prepare is to know what to



Photograph by Edward Shackelford

expect and to always use caution. When driving with your teen, point out school zones and bus stops in your neighborhood so they are not caught off guard by them, and reinforce the importance of always obeying traffic laws. Let your teen know that it is always best to use caution in new situations, slow down and pay special attention to potential hazards.

It is also crucial that you set the example yourself. If your teen sees you speeding in a school zone – even when there are no students present – they may get the idea that these laws are optional. The back to school season can be hectic, especially for new drivers, so your teen needs a role model to follow. Set the example and you can help keep your teen and bus riders safe.

*Source: National Safety Council, a membership organization dedicated to protecting life and promoting health.*

## A Great Gift Idea



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Heat pumps have been around for decades, and in that time, the technology has come a long way. In my opinion, they could use a rebrand.

The name heat pump does not highlight the benefit of air conditioning that comes with the technology. Heat pumps are highly efficient because they don't use energy to create heat. Instead, they use energy to move heat—into the home in the winter and out of it in the summer. They typically produce about three times more energy than they use.

The most common types of heat pumps are air source and ground source. Air source heat pumps transfer heat from the outside air, even if it isn't particularly warm outside. Ground source, or geothermal heat pumps, transfer heat between your home and the ground. With a lower upfront price tag, air source heat pumps are more common.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, air source heat pumps can reduce heating use by about 65% compared to an electric furnace. They come in a variety of styles and configurations to fit different homes. Air source heat pump technology has been popular in warmer climates for decades. There are now cold climate versions available, too.

Here's an explanation of how each type operates:

**Ducted air source heat pumps** are ideal for homes with existing ductwork or homes where ductwork can be feasibly added. Replacing an aging central air conditioning system with a heat pump can significantly reduce heating costs.

**Ductless heat pumps**, or mini-split heat pumps, also draw heat from the outside air. They are a great solution for homes that do not have existing ductwork.

There are many configurations to suit different home layouts. New options on the market allow for coupling with gas or propane backup heat, which might be a good fit for your home. Ductless heat pumps can be a great



*Ductless heat pumps have increased in popularity significantly over the past 10 years. They are a great solution for homes that do not have existing ductwork. Photograph by Bonneville Power Administration*

option for homes with wood stoves. This can help home air quality, heat the home without gathering wood and provide air conditioning in warmer months.

**Geothermal heat pumps** transfer heat from the ground to your home. They are even more efficient than air source heat pumps, reducing energy use by 70% to 80%, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. They can also heat water for use in the home, which saves on water heating costs.

From a user experience perspective, heat pumps are a little different because the heat from the register doesn't feel quite as warm as oil, electric, natural gas or propane heat. That can take a little getting used to, but the efficiency gains and energy savings make the investment worthwhile.

Before buying a heat pump, compare equipment ratings. The higher the rating, the more efficient the equipment. If it is time to replace your heating system, I recommend making the switch to a heat pump to conserve energy and potentially save on your electric bills.

### Understanding the Backup Heat Feature

Most heat pump systems are installed with a backup or auxiliary heat for cold weather. This auxiliary heat can be electric coils, gas, propane or oil, which is usually more expensive to operate. This helps keep your home warm on cold days, but you don't want to use it if you don't need it.

For some heat pumps, turning up the thermostat too quickly or too high can trigger the backup heat. Typically, your thermostat will display emergency or auxiliary heat when using this feature. Speak to your HVAC technician to ensure your thermostat is set to maximize efficiency.

# Common Myths About How to Save Energy at Home

In the age of the internet, you can find lots of advice on ways to save energy at home. However, while energy efficient products and technologies have evolved over the years, sometimes the advice you encounter has not. See what the experts at EnergyStar have to say about common myths about how to save energy at home:



## Changing your habits and behaviors is the best way to save energy in your home.

While adjusting your habits to be more conscientious of your energy consumption can certainly be helpful in reducing energy waste, some of the most significant choices you can make may not require any behavior changes. One of the most impactful choices you can make as a homeowner and consumer to reduce your energy usage is to simply choose energy-efficient products when selecting items for your home. When you choose products that have been EnergyStar certified, you're choosing a product that has been independently verified through third-party lab testing to be more efficient than the standard requirements for that product. By making your choices count, saving energy is baked into your everyday life without you having to consciously change your habits.

## It's more energy and water efficient to handwash your dishes instead of running your dishwasher.

It can feel counterintuitive to think that running an appliance is more energy-saving than washing things by hand. However, appliances like dishwashers have been engineered to use energy and water efficiently over the years, helping you save energy, water, and time. This is also partly because it's easy to underestimate how much water is coming out of your faucet while hand-washing - and using your water heater to also heat that water uses a lot of energy. EnergyStar estimates that using a dishwasher that has earned the EnergyStar label over hand-washing your dishes can cut your utility bills by an average of \$210 per year. Additionally, dishwashers that have earned the EnergyStar are approximately 20% more energy efficient and 30% more water efficient than your standard dishwasher.

## Running longer cycles on appliances like your dishwasher and clothes washer will use more energy, whereas using shorter cycles will help you save energy.

Although using a "quick cycle" means that your appliance will be running for a shorter period, quick cycles are meant to save you time - not energy, water, or money. Counter to what you might expect, some of the technologies in newer appliances may require that it runs for a longer period, yet it can be significantly more efficient. A good example of this would be a heat pump dryer - which has a longer drying cycle but is around 30% more efficient than a standard clothes dryer. Heat pump dryers dry clothes at a lower temperature, which saves energy and ends up being gentler on your clothes. Additionally, heat pump clothes dryers do not need to vent outside, so there is more freedom where laundry can be located in the home - meaning fewer constraints when constructing or remodeling.

# Serve Up a Summertime Spread

Summer meals from small plates to grilled fare may be tasty, but don't fill up entirely on the main course. Remember to save room for your favorite warm-weather sweets.

These Brown Sugar Meringues provide bursting summertime flavor in a little, handheld bite. They're ideal for sharing with loved ones after a weekend barbecue or birthday celebration and, with just a few ingredients, they're as easy to make as they are to enjoy.

To help bake this delicious dessert, you can trust Domino to deliver quality, consistency and results that only a century of experience can bring. Its Light Brown Sugar offers a buttery, caramel flavor, making it a perfect choice for sweets of all kinds.

Keep your summer meals simple by leaning into versatile ingredients that can help you whip up a variety of side dishes.

These Grilled Red Potato Skewers display the delicious, nutritious, versatile qualities of Wisconsin Potatoes. With a multitude of varieties, they're a favorite among world-class chefs, home cooks, large and small supermarkets and even the pickiest of eaters.

It can be love at first bite with these 100% gluten-free potatoes that can add a touch of nutrition to summer cookouts. They're a good source of vitamin B6, high in vitamin C, rich in potassium and an excellent source of fiber.



## Brown Sugar Meringues

- Water**
- 6 large egg whites, at room temperature**
- 1 cup Domino Light Brown Sugar**
- 3/4 cup Domino Granulated Sugar**
- 1/8 teaspoon salt**
- 2 tablespoons Domino Turbinado Sugar (optional)**

Preheat oven to 225 F. Line three baking sheets with parchment paper. Set aside.

Pour 1 inch of water into medium saucepan and heat it until simmering. In heat-proof bowl, mix egg whites, brown sugar, granulated sugar and salt. Put bowl on top of saucepan and warm mixture until it reaches 125 F. Stir continuously and

make sure mixture does not touch water.

Carefully remove from heat. Using electric mixer, beat mixture at high speed 8-10 minutes. Transfer meringue into piping bag fitted with star tip. Pipe 12 meringues per baking sheet.

Sprinkle turbinado sugar on top of meringues, if desired. Bake 1 hour. Turn off oven and allow meringues to rest inside oven 1 hour. Remove from oven and enjoy.



## Grilled Red Potato Skewers

- 2 medium russet or Yukon gold Wisconsin potatoes or 6 red Wisconsin potatoes
- 2 medium zucchini
- 1/2 smoked sausage rope
- 4 skewers (12 inches each)
- 1/2 cup Italian dressing

Preheat grill to medium heat. Cut potatoes in half. Cut zucchini and sausage same width as potatoes. Skewer potatoes, zucchini and sausage. Repeat for each skewer.

Place skewers in dish and cover with Italian dressing. Marinate 5 minutes.

Place skewers on grill and cook 5 minutes on each side, or until potatoes are done. Remove from grill and serve.

## Cauliflower Broccoli Salad

- 1/2 package bacon (8 oz.), chopped and cooked
- 3 cups raw cauliflower, chopped in small florets
- 3 cups raw broccoli, chopped in small florets
- 1/2 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup mild shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup sunflower seeds (optional)
- 1/3 cup raisins (dried cranberries, optional)

### Dressing:

- 1 cup mayonnaise or Miracle Whip
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup white vinegar

Cook bacon and set aside to cool on a paper towel. Prepare the dressing by combining all the ingredients.

In a large bowl, combine broccoli, cauliflower, cheese, seeds, raisins, bacon and onion. Add dressing and mix well. Enjoy!

**Diane O'Donnell, Cozad, Nebraska**

## The Famous Jensen's "Beans and Meat"

- 2 lbs. hamburger, browned and drain
- 1 can pork and beans (Van Kamps regular size can)
- 1/4 cup onions, chopped (Optional)
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- Spices to taste: Salt, Pepper, Lawry's, Garlic Salt

Brown hamburger in an electric skillet or pan on the stove. Drain excess grease. Add the can of pork and beans, onions, brown sugar and spices to cooked and drained hamburger. Simmer over medium heat until thickened, about 20 minutes. This is a quick and reasonable recipe - add a slice of bread with butter on the side.

**Patrick Jensen, Stanton, Nebraska**

## Nut Crunch Peach Cream Pie

- |                             |                            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 3/4 cup white sugar         | 1 unbaked 9-inch pie shell |
| 3 tablespoons flour         |                            |
| 1/4 teaspoons salt          | <b>Nut Crunch topping:</b> |
| 1 cup sour cream            | 1/2 cup flour              |
| 2 eggs, slightly beaten     | 1/4 cup butter             |
| 1/2 teaspoon vanilla        | 1 teaspoon cinnamon        |
| 2 cups fresh sliced peaches | 1/2 cup chopped pecans     |

Combine sugar, flour, and salt. Beat in sour cream, eaten eggs and vanilla. Add peaches, stirring in gently. Pour into unbaked pie shell. Bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes, then bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Take pie out of the oven. Combine all toppings ingredients and sprinkle on top of pie. Return pie to 400 degrees oven for 10 - 15 minutes or until top is brown.

**Trudy Rief, West Point, Nebraska**

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## Use Precaution



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If you see a downed power line, **call 911**.



**Never drive over** downed power lines or anything in contact with them.



**Never try to move** a downed power line.

If a vehicle contacts a **power line** or **utility pole**...

## STAY AWAY AND CALL 911



Consider **all lines** to be live and dangerous.



Stay in place or inside your vehicle unless you see **fire** or **smoke**.



Warn others to stay at least **35 feet away**.



**Tell others** not to approach vehicle, downed lines, or anything that may be in contact with downed lines.



Call **911**.

## In the Event of Fire or Smoke

**Do not** touch the ground and vehicle at the **same time**.



Jump from the vehicle with your **feet together**.



**Shuffle away**, avoid lifting your feet.





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