

NEBRASKA

Magazine

NREA.org

April 2021

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- The Complicated Issue of Power
- A Summer Camp for Nebraska's Young Leaders

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Telling the story of
Rural Nebraska

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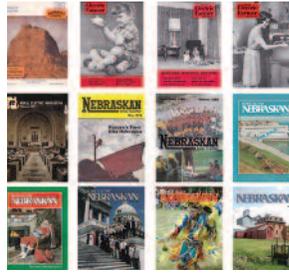
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Cover photograph by Vitalinka © 123rf.com



Wayne Price

Getting a surprise with the electric bill

Every time I heard my heat pump kick on during the first week of February, when the temperatures plunged to sub-zero levels, I dreaded what it meant for my electric bill I'd be receiving. My home is all-electric so I knew all that extra time my heat pump was running would translate into a higher bill.

I keep my heat pump on a schedule by using a smart thermostat so it drops a couple degrees during the day, when my wife and I are at work and the kids are at school. But those temperatures were so cold that it still had to run a lot to even maintain the lower settings.

I'm also enrolled in the budget billing plan that Norris Public Power District offers, so I'm less likely to see a huge spike in my bill, but I will probably see a small increase over the next few months as a result.

Luckily, I didn't have to run any space heaters or electric blankets during that time period. And my family did its best to limit our use of hot water so the water heater wouldn't have to run as much. Space heating and water heating are the two biggest drivers of energy use in most households, accounting for over 50 percent of a home's energy use during the winter months.

Energy costs vary each month and are based on how many kilowatt-hours you used. Most rural electric utilities have long term contracts for power so you won't see the kWh rates jump as a result of the Polar Freeze in February.

The amount of energy each home consumes depends on a variety of factors, including the size of the home, age, insulation, and even the age and efficiency level of the HVAC system. I recently replaced my air source heat pump to a more efficient model, so that should provide me with a little help.

Your neighbors could have dramatically different energy bills, even if the house size is similar. Factors like how many people live or work in the home, what the thermostat is set at, how many appliances and other electric devices are used, or how many lights are on, have a big impact on energy use. You might be using LED bulbs and they are still using incandescent bulbs, which are terribly inefficient.

If you'd like to learn more about how you can cut your energy use, contact your local electric utility. They can provide information on ways to save, energy efficiency rebates, incentives and other programs that are available.

Happy Easter
from our family
to yours!



Celebrating our 75th anniversary

The name has changed, but the mission remains the same

Nebraska Magazine is celebrating the 75th anniversary of publishing a consumer magazine by the Nebraska Rural Electric Association. Since the inaugural issue in 1947, the magazine has reported many of the changes that have occurred across rural Nebraska and the public power industry.

Over the years the name of the magazine has changed but the mission to allow the NREA member systems to communicate with their customers has not. We continue to strive to tell our story and educate our readers about important topics, and entertain with articles about the interesting people and places that are part of Nebraska.

In 1947 the NREA published the first edition of *Nebraska Electric Farmer*. It was mailed to 15,500 customers of 16 rural electric systems. Paul Marvin was the first editor and worked from his home in Beatrice, Neb. The magazine name changed to *Rural Electric Nebraskan* in 1972. Circulation increased to 58,000 customers and reached homes in 70 counties.

There have been a handful of editors throughout the years, including Marvin, Lucille Clema, Art Grimm, Bob Selzer, and Jack Merritt. Some features, such as sewing patterns, Adult Pen Pals and how to use a particular electric appliance, have disappeared from the pages. There was even a section on TV listings for a few years in the early 1950s, meant to

promote the wider use of television and radio. Other features, like electric safety, energy efficiency and recipes, have endured and are still part of the magazine today.

The magazine documented Nebraska's first participation in NRECA's Youth Tour in 1962 and also printed a cover story of the first Youth Energy Camp held at the state 4-H camp near Halsey, Neb. in 1980. We continue to promote both of these popular summer youth programs, including the 2021 Youth Energy Leadership Camp on Page 18 of this issue.

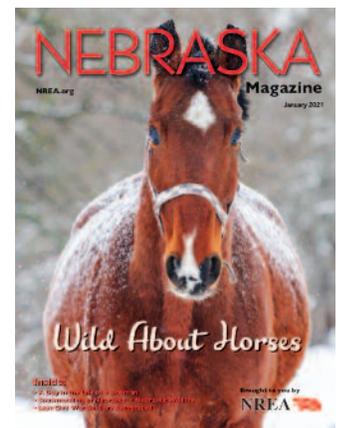
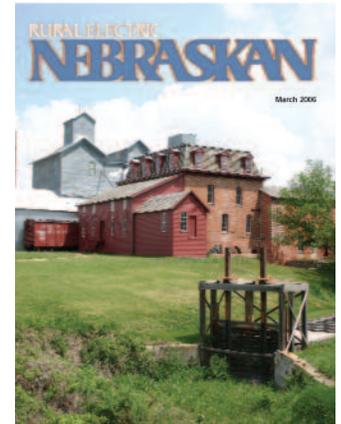
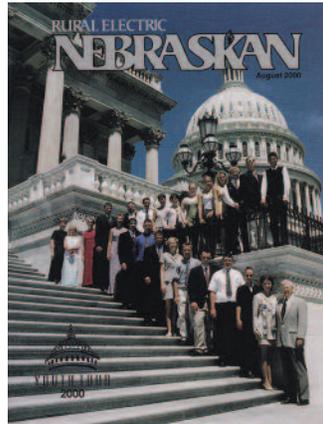
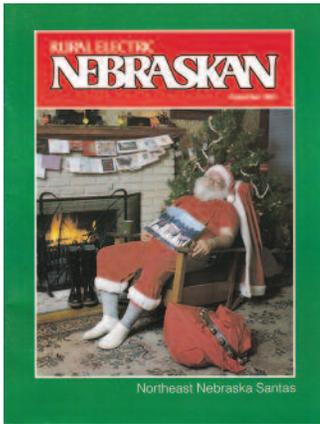
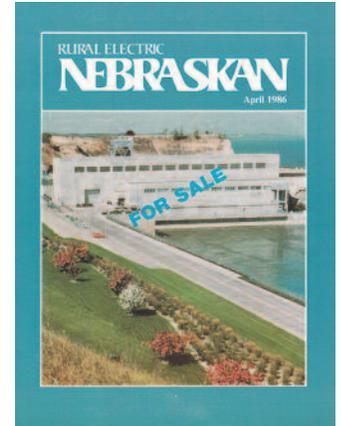
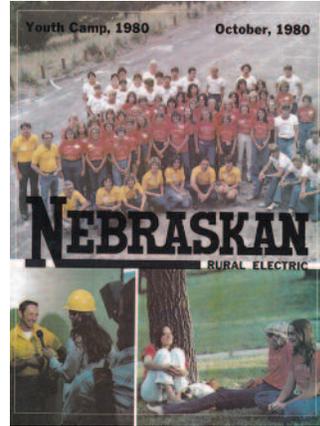
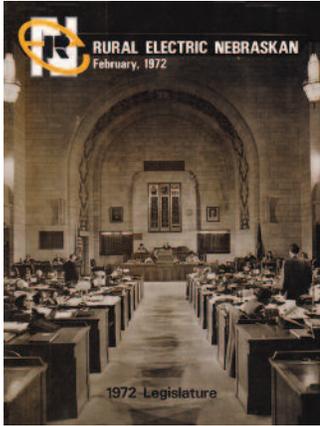
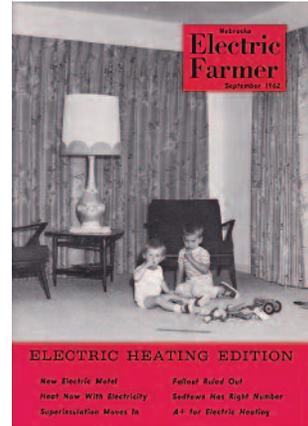
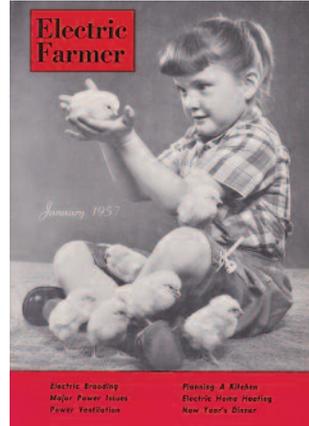
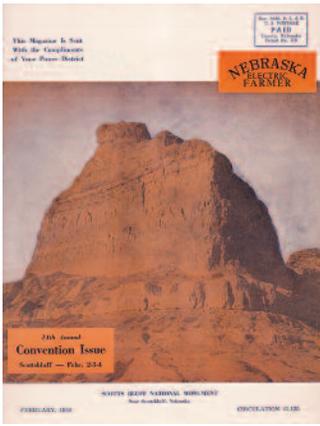
With the help of a graphic arts and magazine design team, the magazine underwent a rebranding and redesign starting with the December 2020 issue. The new design includes an increase in the number of stories that "tell the rural Nebraska story" and more vibrant photographs and graphic images. These changes will take our storylines and content to a



new level.

The simple fact that the magazine has been supported by the rural electric systems and their customers for 75 years shows that it continues to have real value. It is a low-cost method of keeping every customer up-to-date on public power on a monthly basis.

Hopefully the magazine will continue to inform and entertain its readers for the next 75 years.





LINEWORKERS BRING THE LIGHT.

Lineworker Appreciation Day

On April 12, remember to
#ThankALineworker.

If you were asked to associate an image or a person with your local electric utility, I bet you would picture a lineworker. One of the most visible employees of the utility, lineworkers work tirelessly to ensure our community receives uninterrupted power 24/7.

“Lineworker” is listed as one of the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S. This is understandable as they perform detailed tasks near high-voltage power lines. Regardless of the time of day, having to brave stormy weather and other challenging conditions, lineworkers must climb 40 feet in the air, often carrying heavy equipment to get the job done.

Being a lineworker is not a glamorous or easy profession. It takes years of specialized training, ongoing education, dedication, and equally important, a sense of service and commitment. How else can you explain the willingness to leave the comfort of your home to tackle a challenging job in difficult conditions, when most are sheltering comfortably at home? This dedication and sense of service to the community is truly what sets them apart. That’s why we set aside the second Monday

in April to celebrate and recognize the men and women who work around the clock to keep the lights on.

While lineworkers may be the most visible employees, it’s important to note that there is a team of highly skilled professionals working behind the scenes. Engineers provide ongoing expertise and guidance on the operations side of the utility. Member service representatives are always standing by to take your calls and questions. Our information technology (IT) experts are continuously monitoring our system to help safeguard sensitive data. And these are just a few of the folks who work together to ensure we can deliver the service and reliability you expect and deserve. Without them, our lineworkers wouldn’t be able to “bring the light” to our community.

On April 12, and any time you see a lineworker, I hope you’ll thank them for their exceptional service. I also hope you’ll remember that you have a dedicated team of professionals working behind the scenes at your rural electric utility whose commitment to service runs just as deep.

New water heaters more efficient than older models

You may not realize it, but the water heater is the second largest user of energy in most homes in Nebraska. Only space heating and cooling systems use more. However, unlike heating and cooling equipment which are seasonal, your water heater works year round. The average home uses 65 gallons of hot water per day. If you pay an average of 12¢ per kilowatt-hour for electricity, you may be spending over \$800 per year for hot water!

If you are shopping for a new or replacement unit, there is a lot to consider. With today's technologies, there are several different types of water heaters available:

- Conventional storage water heaters offer a ready reservoir (storage tank) of hot water.
- Tankless or demand-type water heaters heat water directly without a storage tank.
- Heat pump water heaters move heat from one place to another instead of generating heat directly for providing hot water.
- Solar water heaters use the sun's heat to provide hot water.
- Tankless coil and indirect water heaters use a home's space heating system to heat water.

Cost varies from technology-to-technology. In general, more-efficient technologies cost more up front but provide significant savings over time, which reduces the total amount you have to pay to have hot water.

Larry's Safety Lesson

Prevent electric shock drowning

By Larry Oetken



Each year, 3,800 people die from drowning. Electric shock drowning occurs when an electric current

escapes boats, docks and lights near marinas, shocking nearby swimmers.

There are no visible signs of current seeping into water, which makes this a hidden danger.

The electric shock paralyzes swimmers, making them unable to swim to safety.

- Never swim near a boat or launching ramp. Residual current could flow into the water from the boat or the marina's wiring, potentially putting anyone in the water at risk of electric shock.

- If you feel any tingling sensations while in the water, tell someone and swim back in the direction from which you came. Immediately report it to the dock or marina owner.

- If you see an electric shock drowning taking place, turn the power off, throw a life ring in the water and call 911. Do not enter the water.

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

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The Complicated Issue of Power

by Lisa Bard

Valentine's Day 2021 was not a bastion of warm fuzzies in Nebraska. A cold snap had descended over much of the central United States and would prove to be one more "historic" and "unprecedented" weather event in the days after. In the end, the biggest challenge was an overburdened power grid that struggled – but ultimately persevered – to keep up with immense energy demand from Feb. 14 through Feb. 18. As with most difficult things that cause harm and chaos, the reality is that it could have been much worse.

For most of us, power is something we take for granted. When we flip the switch, we expect the lights to come on. When we turn up the thermostat in the morning, we expect the furnace to fire up. When we go out to start the diesel pickup, we expect the engine to start because the heater we plugged in the night before kept the engine/fuel from freezing. However, if we have a better understanding of how, when, why and by whom power is delivered to our homes and businesses, we will never again take power for granted.

ENERGY EMERGENCY LEVELS

Energy Emergency Alert
LEVEL 3

SPP foresees or has implemented power shutoffs. At this level, SPP is deficient in operating reserves and has initiated assistance from outside sources.

Energy Emergency Alert
LEVEL 2

SPP is anticipating interruption of service and is taking steps to avoid power shutoffs, requesting outside help to meet requirements. Customers will be asked to conserve energy.

Energy Emergency Alert
LEVEL 1

SPP has enough power to meet load requirements, but not enough backup resources. Customers may be asked to conserve energy.

A Complex System

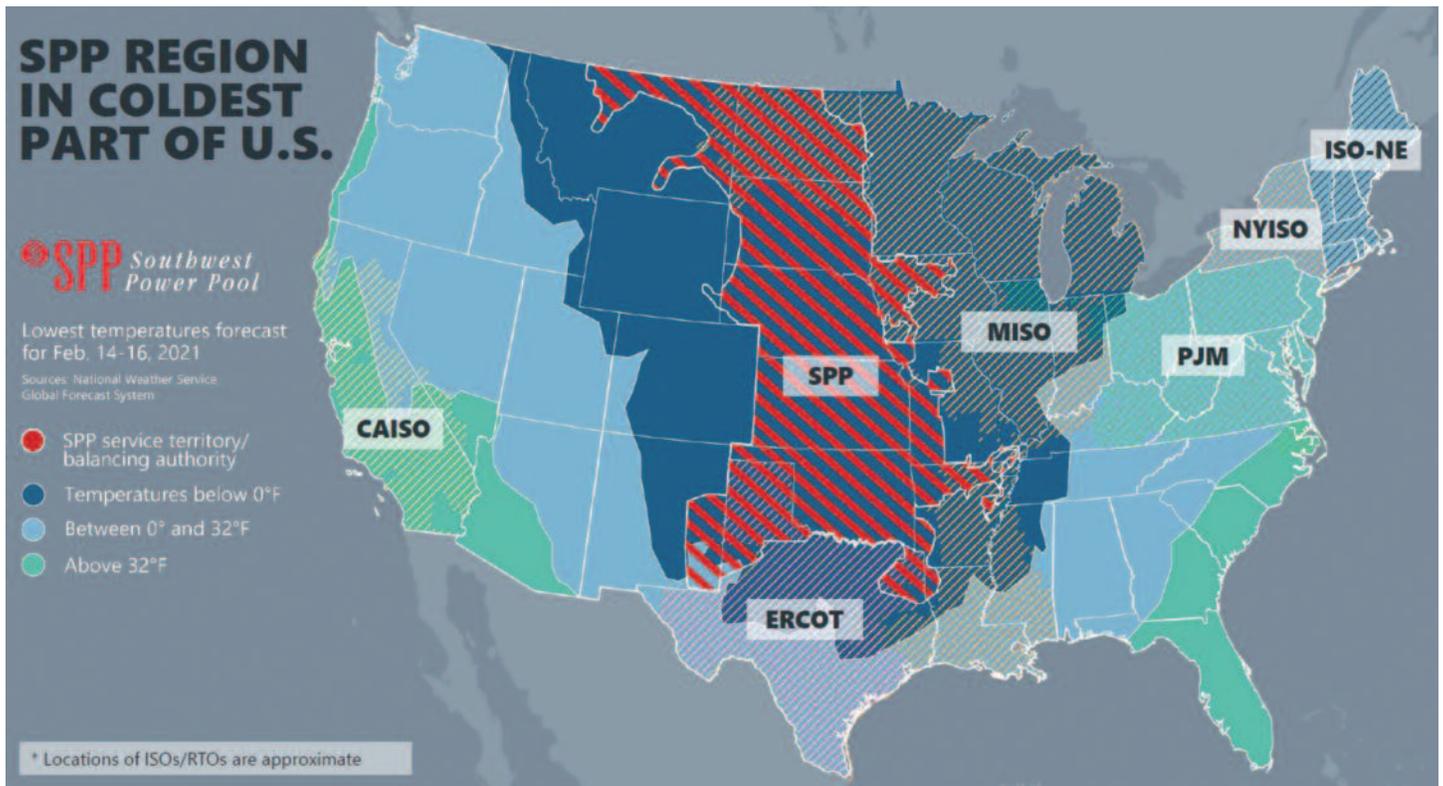
The complicated and complex systems that create and deliver power to homes and businesses is ... complicated and complex. To simplify, power is generated at power plants and sold to public or private utility companies who, ultimately, deliver the power to customers. How that delivery is regulated is a very intricate dance that involves a balance of generation (supply) and load (demand) and is coordinated by various electric utilities, pools or organizations throughout the United States. In rural Nebraska (and beyond), the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) is the regulating organization. NPPD belongs to the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) in order to obtain power supply from a larger, more diverse, competitively priced and stable resource pool.

Here in Nebraska, public power districts, electric cooperatives and municipalities then deliver the regulated flow of power to their customers. The Nebraska Rural Electric Association (NREA) is the private, non-profit trade association for 34 rural electric systems that provide electric service to consumers in most of the rural areas and many of the small towns in Nebraska.

This complex system involves many players along the route, and all work in tandem to provide power to individuals, businesses and organizations across the state.

Yet Another 'Perfect Storm'

The perfect power storm in February was caused by subzero temperatures over a very large portion of the United States that lasted for days. It significantly taxed energy generation, even when reserves were utilized and additional power plants were brought back into production. This event was complicated by low wind generation over the same time period, a natural gas supply shortage, and adverse impacts from the cold weather on certain fuel-relating and generating equipment. As temperatures dropped and remained low, the corresponding demand for electricity increased and, eventually, generation could not keep up with load. This combination of factors and its resulting consequences are so rare that SPP had never asked member utilities to shed firm load in its 80-year history. That became necessary



beginning Feb. 14.

As frigid conditions continued and even worsened, and with the SPP asking for load shedding, the NPPD went into various Energy Emergency Alerts, beginning on Feb. 14. By the time the five-day event was over, NPPD had cycled through all three levels and had to implement rolling blackouts in order to avoid prolonged, widespread blackouts, as well as to keep energy flowing to necessary/critical customers such as hospitals and nursing homes. While inconvenient and very problematic, the rolling blackouts were done to avoid a larger, uncontrolled shutdown that would have affected the entire state for many days, even weeks.

For Nebraska's cattle producers and feeders, loss of power is more than an inconvenience – it can mean a loss of life in a very short time. Ranchers and feeders rely on heat, light, thawed water, and functioning equipment and feedmills to care for livestock. With little to no advance notice of the blackouts, livestock producers were scrambling to adjust and to keep livestock safe, fed and alive. Even the self-reliant, can-do attitude of agricultural

operators was tested when they were faced with blackouts that – many felt – could have been communicated in advance so that the power loss could have been planned for and/or mitigated.

In reality, the blackouts were implemented in real time by real people and was done only as a last resort and with very little time to notify customers of what was coming. According to SPP and NPPD, predicting and communicating rolling outages is difficult, due to the real-time nature of the power grid.

Nebraska Cattlemen (NC) can attest to that, as a rolling power outage hit the NC office during the weekly staff meeting on Feb. 16, with minimal warning. As expected and was typical, the outage only lasted for about 30 minutes.

At the Local Level

Two of the many local public power districts in

Continued on Page 12

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Nebraska shared their thoughts about the load shedding that occurred. Chet McWhorter, Cuming County Public Power District general manager, says the loss of power was a surprise to him and his staff at their office in West Point.

“We were caught off guard just like everyone else,” he says. “We were participating in a training session when the office went dark, along with the rest of the town of West Point.”

Once they discovered what was happening, they began communicating with customers about the kind of situation they were dealing with. As always, everyone wanted more information, regardless of what type of business they were involved in. People like to know what is happening or going to happen.

“We used all of our social media platforms, along with discussions with the local newspapers and radio stations, so that as many as possible would know what we knew,” McWhorter says. “I was pleased with the response from the public and feel that they at least understood what was happening, even if they didn’t like it.”

Communication with customers is very important during an event like this, notes Gwen Kautz, Dawson Public Power District (PPD) general manager. Many public power districts and electric cooperatives, including Dawson PPD, turned to social media to keep customers up to date on the sudden impact of the rolling blackouts.

“Even though we shared on social media, we only reach a certain demographic,” Kautz says. “Pare that down to one element — we can put information out there, but we can’t make people read it.”

McWhorter adds that there is a lot of misinformation being spread across those same social media channels.

“At the end of the day, we are still battling against misinformation,” he says. “Many in our area believe that they got their power shut off so that Texas could have it.”

Another difficult issue was explaining why rolling

blackouts were necessary to prevent a large-scale catastrophic failure of the electric grid to customers facing sub-zero temperatures without electricity and struggling to prevent larger problems on their operations. The rolling blackouts are not like the typical outages Nebraskans deal with during severe weather, so the questions and uncertainty were also atypical.

“SPP did what they had to do to protect the grid,” Kautz says. “Could it have been communicated better? Yes. But we also want our customers to know that we had no notice either. What made it different from a regular outage was people feeling like it was a choice we made.”

Learning Opportunity

Each and every public power district responded to the critical balance of load vs. generation and, in the end, load shedding had to happen and had to happen quickly. The challenge then became how to effectively communicate the coming blackouts to customers who would have no notice and no time to adjust, adapt or pivot. This challenge was met as best as possible given the

situation, but all involved realize that this event — now that it is no longer an immediate threat — has become a learning opportunity.

In essence, how do we all communicate more effectively with our members and customers in times of crisis? How do we create or implement alternatives for customers should this happen again? Local public power districts are talking to their customers, Nebraska

Cattlemen is talking to its members and brainstorming ideas to help members, and Nebraska Rural Electric Association is doing the same. SPP and NPPD are both conducting reviews of the storm event so that they can improve next time something like this happens.

As we learn more about all sides of this issue, we hope that the shift from blame to problem solving and creating solutions occurs on all sides.

WHAT CAUSED THE BLACKOUTS

- Not enough available generation to meet demand during the severe weather event
- Record demand created transmission load issues
- Record low temperatures caused high demand for electricity
- Inadequate supplies of natural gas needed to power some electric generators
- Extreme cold temperatures made it difficult for some units to operate

ALWAYS ASSUME ALL DOWNED LINES ARE **LIVE**

Downed power lines can be **deadly**. Always assume a downed power line is **live** and avoid approaching them or anything near them.

Use Precaution



Downed power lines can energize the ground up to **35 feet away**. Even more in wet conditions.



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



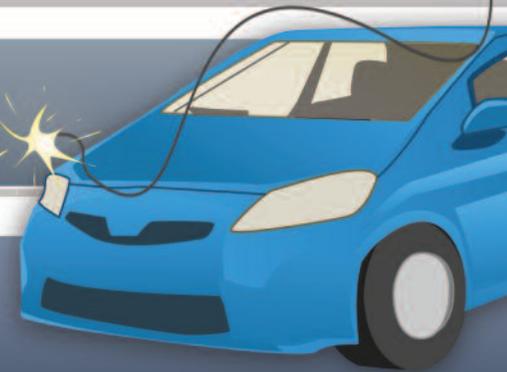
Never drive over downed power lines or anything in contact with them.



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.



by James Dukesherer, NREA Interim Director of Government Relations

Senators Conclude Public Hearings and Choose Priority Bills

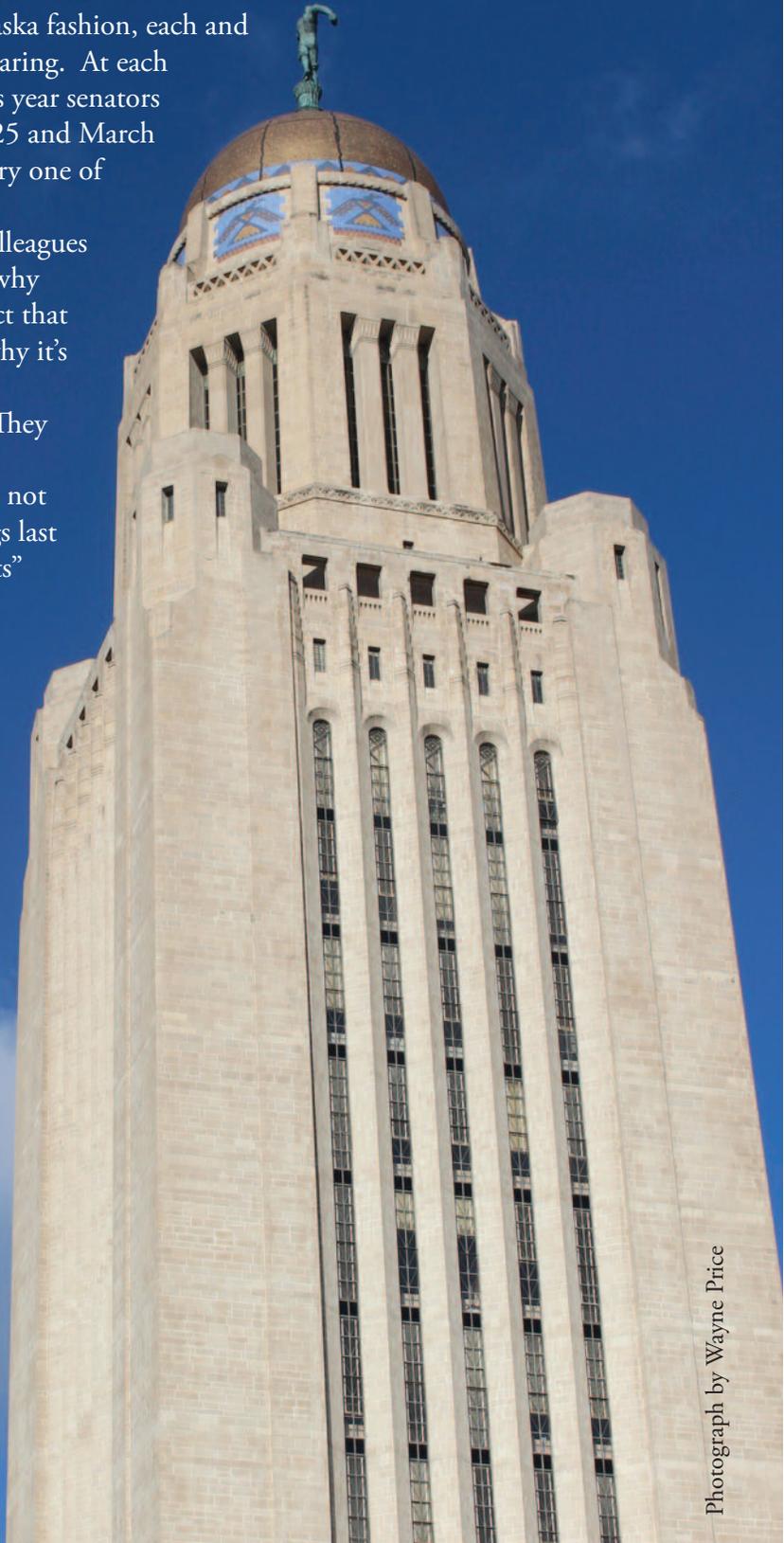
Up until mid-March, Nebraska Unicameral senators dedicated most of their time to the committee hearing process. In unique Nebraska fashion, each and every bill that gets introduced has a public committee hearing. At each hearing, the public is welcome to attend and testify. This year senators introduced 684 bills. This means that between January 25 and March 12, fifteen legislative committees heard testimony on every one of these bills.

As I explain the Nebraska Unicameral system to my colleagues in other states, they don't get it. They don't understand why senators would hold a hearing on each bill despite the fact that only a few will ultimately pass. They don't understand why it's not up to the committee chair to decide which bills get hearings and which bills come up for votes to advance. They don't understand why the public would be allowed, and encouraged, to come in to testify knowing that they may not be subject matter experts and it might mean that hearings last late into the evening. In their states, only invited "experts" are allowed to testify, and the committee chair decides which bills get hearings and which bills do not.

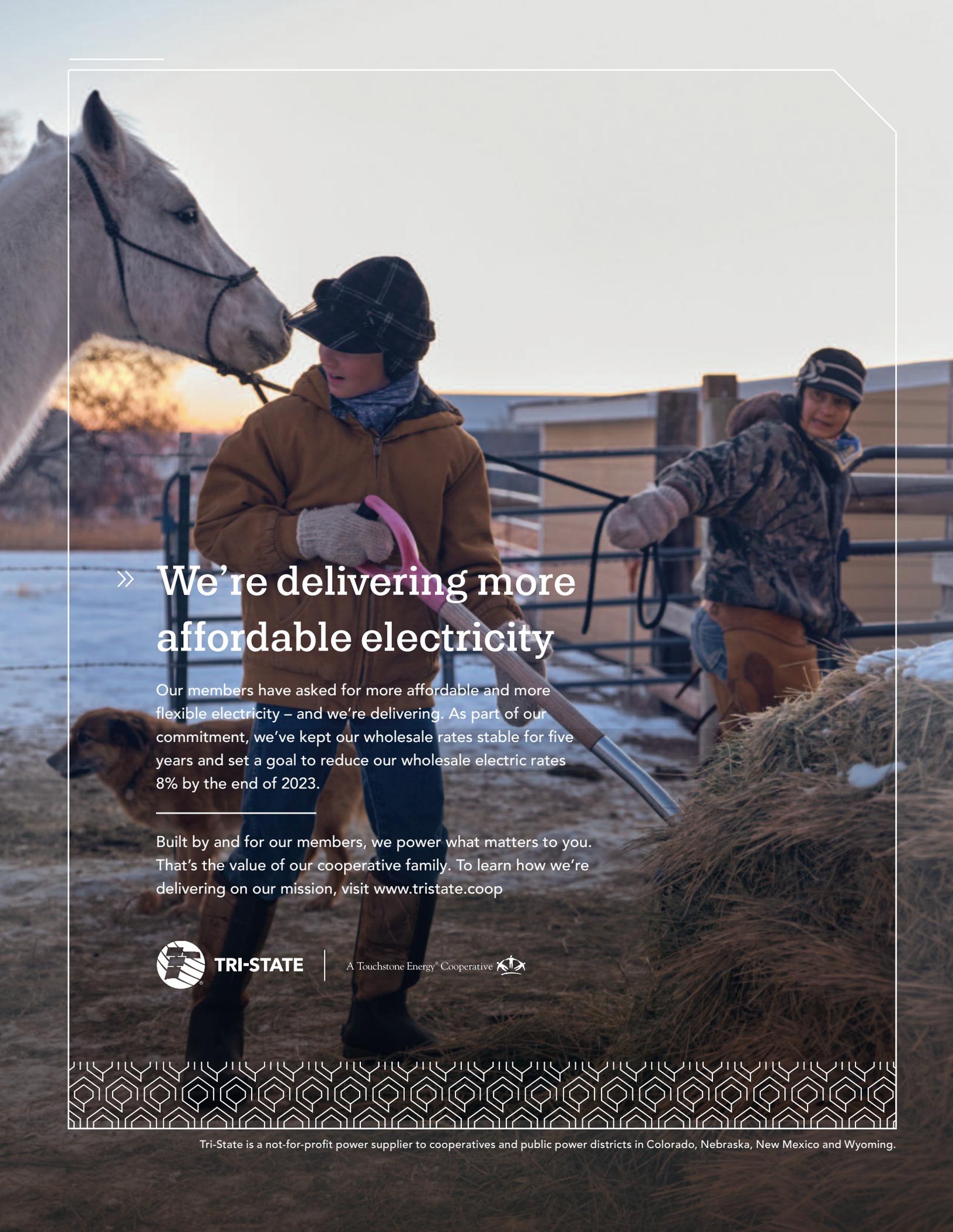
There is no doubt that our process is time-consuming. For some senators it means they heard testimony on five bills in the morning and five bills in the afternoon for seven straight weeks. From our perspective, there is no better system in the county. Our process ensures every idea from every senator has its day to be heard. Our non-partisan committee process ensures that even a strong committee chair cannot hold a bill in committee by themselves. Our process, ensures that the people most impacted by legislation, have an opportunity to voice their support or opposition to a bill and the senators will be present to hear their concerns.

Our one-house abbreviated process also means that the public has an increased responsibility to be the watchful eye of our state government. After all, it only takes 25 votes to pass a bill.

Now that the hearing process has concluded, we have seen each senator choose their priority bill for the year and the senators are engaging in full floor debate. As this occurs, the Nebraska Rural Electric Association will continue to be an advocate for rural Nebraskans and the rural public power districts and electric cooperatives that we represent.



Photograph by Wayne Price



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Our members have asked for more affordable and more flexible electricity – and we're delivering. As part of our commitment, we've kept our wholesale rates stable for five years and set a goal to reduce our wholesale electric rates 8% by the end of 2023.

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The Wolf's Den Bar & Grill in Stanton, Neb. is celebrating its 40th anniversary with a mother and daughter duo cooking up a storm. The business is served electrically by Stanton County Public Power District.

Pictured are, from left, Lynnette Raasch, Karen Myrick, a 25 year employee, and Brandi Easley. Photographs by Wayne Price



Grab a bite to eat at the Wolf's Den Bar & Grill

by Wayne Price

When Lynnette Raasch got into the business of running the Wolf's Den Bar & Grill in Stanton, Neb. 40 years ago, she says she didn't really know what she was getting herself into. Today, Lynnette works along side her daughter, Brandi Easley, who has owned the business for the past 12 years.

Raasch and her late husband, Jim Easley, purchased the bar in 1981. Jim, a truck driver, wanted to get out of the trucking business, she said. They came to the bar and grill when it was owned by Bob and Diane Wolf, so when it went up for sale, they bought it. They liked the bar's name so they decided to keep it.

"Mom learned how to cook her own homemade soups and gravy and she taught me how to do it," Brandi said. "We went on from there."

The Wolf's Den Bar & Grill offers a variety of lunch specials, such as chicken-fried steak, meatloaf and hot beef sandwiches. They also serve breakfast, which is popular with local residents.

"Our main business is food," Brandi said. "If we were just a bar, we probably wouldn't still be open."

They are known for their 10 ounce hamburgers, which is what a lot of customers order. Anyone who orders the triple better have a hearty appetite.

The food side of the business got so popular that they had to take out two pool tables and a foosball table.

"We needed to have more seating so we got rid of all that," Lynnette said.

Brandi works as the main cook every evening, along with another

employee. She also does all the food ordering and payroll.

They are beginning to see a recovery from the impact of COVID-19, which hit them hard like many small businesses in Nebraska. A majority of their customers are older and were not comfortable with coming out to eat. They served a lot of carry-out meals, Lynnette said.

The business was closed from March through June last year and was only able to open at half capacity. Brandi said they used to serve breakfast seven days a week but now only offer it on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

"We will likely get back to a regular schedule this summer," she said.

"Once the weather warms up, people will start to come back."



**ATTENTION
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Join us at the NREA
**YOUTH ENERGY
LEADERSHIP CAMP**

July 19 - 23, 2021



Each year member-systems of the Nebraska Rural Electric Association select high school students to attend the NREA Youth Energy Leadership Camp at the State 4-H Camp in the Halsey National Forest. The 2021 Youth Energy Leadership Camp will be held July 19-23.

The popular week-long camp was created to give young people a better understanding of public power, electricity, power generation and the rural electric industry. The goal is to offer a program that challenges students educationally, socially, and recreationally.

The NREA Youth Energy Leadership Camp provides a “hands-on” approach to the public power industry and member-owned businesses. The students will join other high school students from Nebraska and Wyoming, along with adult counselors and junior counselors. The adult counselors are employees of rural electric systems who donate their time and talents to the camp. The junior counselors are campers from the previous year who are selected by their peers to return in a leadership role.

On the first day of camp, a board of directors is elected to oversee the operation of the newly formed electric power district. The board then interviews and chooses a general manager to oversee the committee activities and act as a liaison between the counselors and campers.

Every participant has a role in the workings of the camp. Students can participate in the Ambassador competition or actively seek a position on the Board of Directors. Each student must also volunteer to serve on

at least one of the committees responsible for various aspects of the camp activities. There is even a talent show where the campers can show off their talents.

A highlight of the camp involves a tour of the Kingsley Hydro Station at Lake McConaughy and Gerald Gentleman Station, a coal-fired power plant at Sutherland, Neb.

High school students who attend the energy camp may compete for a chance to participate in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association’s Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. with expenses paid by the Nebraska Rural Electric Association. Three students are chosen as part of the Ambassador competition held during camp.

The competition involves submitting an application at camp, presenting a self-introduction speech and delivering a five-minute speech on an assigned topic. Each camper votes for three candidates following the speech with the top male, top female and person with the next highest vote total becoming next year’s ambassadors. The top six finalists are invited to return to next year’s Youth Energy Leadership Camp as junior counselors.

Recreational activities include basketball, volleyball and canoeing.

Camp expenses and transportation are provided by each sponsoring rural electric system. High school freshmen, sophomores and juniors whose families are customers of NREA member-systems may apply.

For more information about attending Youth Energy Leadership Camp, send the RSVP form to your rural electric provider.

2021 Youth Energy Leadership Camp RSVP Form

Name _____ Age _____ Current Grade _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone number (_____) _____

Name of parents _____

Sponsoring rural electric system : _____

When thunderstorms are rolling across the horizon, get inside a safe building right away. Every thunderstorm produces lightning, which kills more people each year than tornadoes or hurricanes. Heavy rain from thunderstorms can cause flash flooding, and high winds can damage homes and blow down trees and utility poles, causing widespread power outages.

- Listen to local news or NOAA Weather Radio for emergency updates. Watch for signs of a storm, like darkening skies, lightning flashes or increasing wind.
- Postpone outdoor activities if thunderstorms are likely to occur. Many people struck by lightning are not in the area where rain is occurring.
- If a severe thunderstorm warning is issued, take shelter in a substantial building or in a vehicle with the windows closed. Get out of mobile homes that can blow over in high winds.

• If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be in danger from lightning. If thunder roars, go indoors! The National Weather Service recommends staying inside for at least 30 minutes after the last thunder clap.

- Avoid electrical equipment and telephones. Use battery-powered TVs and radios instead.
- Shutter windows and close

outside doors securely. Keep away from windows.

- Do not take a bath, shower or use plumbing.
- If you are outside and cannot reach a safe building, avoid high ground; water; tall, isolated trees; and metal objects such as fences or bleachers. Picnic shelters, dugouts and sheds are NOT safe.

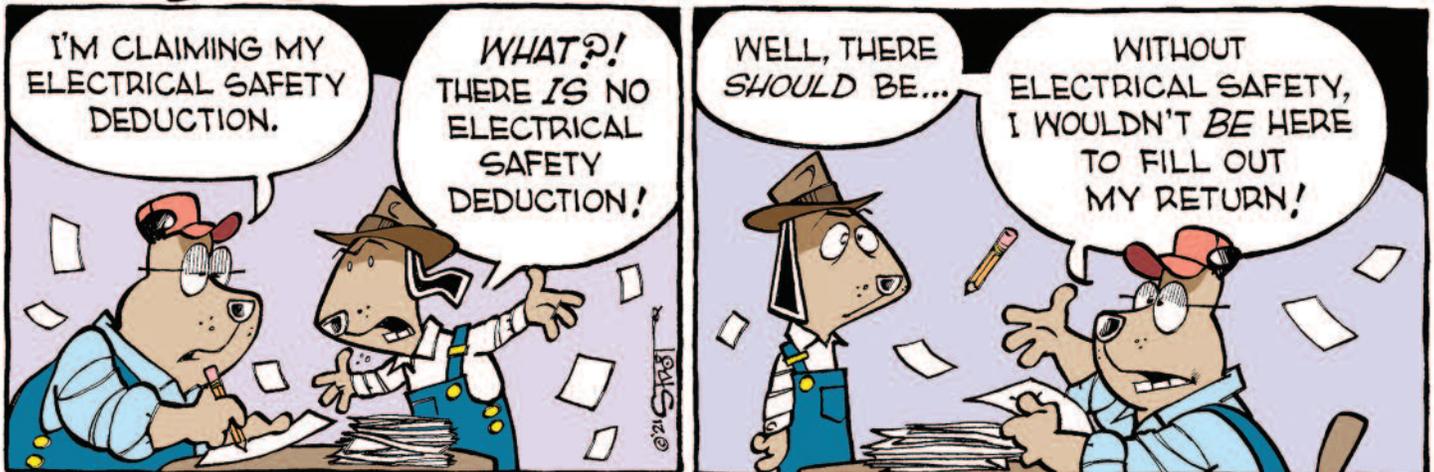
Source: American Red Cross

Shocking Facts About Lightning

- There are 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes annually in the U.S.
- Every year, 300 Americans are struck by lightning.
- Of those struck, 30 are killed and others suffer lifelong disabilities.

[#StormSafety](#)

Murphy



Be part of the NREA Virtual Youth Experience



June 9 - 11, 2021

Connecting Rural Nebraska to Washington, D.C.

Sophomore, Junior & Senior High School students can participate in virtual sessions from 9 - 11 a.m. CT each day.

Space is limited for this free educational event.

Please sign up to participate by May 1, 2021. Send an email to rblack@nrea.org to register.



Compete for one of three monetary awards worth \$2,500, \$2,000 or \$1,000.



Each participant will be required to submit a short introductory video about themselves, their community, and their local rural public power district or electric cooperative.



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LOVE THE OUTDOORS? BE SAFE OUT THERE

2/3 of lightning fatalities are associated with outdoor recreational activities.

Pay attention to weather forecasts **before you go canoeing or boating**. Get off the open water as soon as you **hear thunder**.

Do not use generators in enclosed areas. The same goes for grills, camping stoves or other small appliances that produce carbon monoxide.

Look up for power lines while fishing or sailing.
FACT: Fishing is the most common outdoor activity associated with lightning-related deaths.

Going for a hike? If you hear thunder or see lightning, **do not seek shelter under a tree.**

Tent camping? Plan ahead, seek shelter in a hard-top vehicle or four-sided building during a storm or at the first sight of lightning.

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Going to the Chapel

Nebraska is home to many beautiful churches. Some can be found in the city and some in the middle of nowhere. There are churches that are on the National Register of Historic Places in Nebraska and others that have been abandoned on the prairie.

Religion has been an important part of life in Nebraska, dating back to many of the early settlers who had come from Europe.

Church means fellowship as much as a devotion to God and it is a community of friends and family who serve each other and their communities through ministry.





Clockwise from far left: The Holy Family Shrine sits on a hill overlooking I-80 near Gretna, Neb. Photograph by Dee Ritter

The Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran in Grand Island, Neb. blends in with the fall foliage. Photograph by Sam Reagan

Snow covers the Mount Carmel Catholic Church in Paplin, Neb. Photograph by Kathy Chase

The Zion Presbyterian Church in Northeast Nebraska sits idle. Photograph by Wayne Price

The Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Buffalo County before it burned to the ground in December 2019. Photograph by Kathy Chase

Prepare and Make a Plan

by **Derrill Holly**

Families always need to be prepared for emergencies, and ongoing concerns triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic have prompted several new recommendations for evacuation planning, emergency supply kits and community shelter operations.

“We did a lot of work in 2020 to update our guidance for hurricanes, wildfires and other natural disasters to include COVID-19 guidance,” said Capt. Renee Funk, DVM of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

According to the U.S. Public Health Service veterinarian, many of the precautions and revisions implemented as part of the pandemic response are expected to be among the CDC’s recommendations in place for 2021. Some are likely to remain in place permanently.

Funk, who serves as the CDC’s associate director of emergency management said personal protective gear, hygiene items and cleaning products are among the most prominent additions to every family’s emergency supply preparation lists.

“We recommended a hand sanitizer that’s at least 60% alcohol, disinfectant wipes and two masks for each person,” said Funk. “Those things should be considered permanently added to your go kit, and you need to regularly check for expiration dates for these products.”

Funk recommends that those items be included in both personal go kits and in the family’s cache of emergency supplies. She also suggests that when you review the expiration dates of perishables, like canned goods, other foods and medications, you also replace any cleaning items or protective gear that might also be out-of-date.

The CDC is stressing the importance of early preparation. Checking and updating supplies before



12 WAYS

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/>  Sign up for Alerts and Warnings | <input type="checkbox"/>  Make a Plan | <input type="checkbox"/>  Save for a Rainy Day |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  Plan with Neighbors | <input type="checkbox"/>  Make Your Home Safer | <input type="checkbox"/>  Know Evacuation Routes |

ACTION AND PREPARE

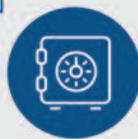
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**Assemble or
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**Get Involved in
Your Community**



**Document and
Insure Property**

they are needed can prevent the need for shopping trips during the runup to threatening storms or other emergencies. If shopping excursions are needed, officials recommend that a limited number—one or two people, considered low risk be designated to make all necessary shopping runs.

Fresh approaches to community shelters implemented and refined in 2020 are also expected to remain in place indefinitely. Instead of large, centralized shelters in schools or other community buildings, the CDC, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and their state and community partners have turned to dispersed sheltering, which is more conducive to social distancing.

“That means putting more people into hotel rooms, instead of into group or congregate shelters,” said Funk. “It costs a lot more money for FEMA to pay for all those hotel rooms, but American Red Cross generally coordinates sheltering, and they shifted really well.”

Last year, Red Cross developed and deployed smart phone apps that helped keep track of shelter evacuees, allowing them to advise shelter coordinators about health concerns, shelter conditions and other issues.

Remember, in the event of any emergency or natural disaster, you’ll want to be prepared to shelter in place for several days if necessary. FEMA recommends having an emergency kit stocked with all important supplies in one or two containers that are easy to access. Visit [ready.gov/kit](https://www.ready.gov/kit) for a full checklist of disaster kit items and additional recommendations.

While we certainly hope disaster doesn’t strike, it’s never a bad idea to be prepared. Spring and summer often bring severe storms, so now is the time to make a kit, make a plan and stay informed. That’s the best way to care for yourself in your family.

Q : My wife and I have been in our 1,500 square-foot home with no air conditioning for 10 years now, and we're tired of it! What options should we look into so we can stay cool this summer?

A : It's the right time of year to think about how to stay cool this summer. There are a few low- and no-cost cooling strategies, like using ceiling fans to keep air moving, turning off unused electrical devices and appliances, and blocking direct sunlight with window coverings. If you live in a climate with cool summer evenings, you can let cool air in late at night or early in the morning, then seal up the home to keep that air from leaking out.

If that's not enough, you can install air conditioning (A/C). Below are three common options for home cooling, and we've included approximate cost estimates for each. But please be aware that costs are highly variable.

Window Units/Portable Cooling

Window A/C units or portable A/C units are the lowest cost approach. Portable units can be moved from room to room and come equipped with a length of duct to exhaust hot air out a nearby window. Window units are mounted in a window opening and cool one room. The efficiency of portable and window units has improved over the years, but none of them are as efficient as most central A/C units or a mini-split heat pump.

If you live in a hot, dry climate, you could consider an evaporative cooler (sometimes referred to as a swamp cooler). Window units have been around for a while, but now there are portable options available. Evaporative cooling units can be less expensive than traditional A/C, but don't buy one until you do the research to determine how well evaporative cooling works in your local area. Whatever you choose, make sure it is rated for the size of the space you are cooling.

- *Cost: \$149 to \$1,000 per new unit (depending on your climate and how many square feet you're trying to cool)*

Ductless Min-Split Heat Pumps

A ductless mini-split heat pump has a compressor outside the home that's connected to air handler units in as many



The condenser unit for a mini-split heat pump system is usually mounted on an exterior wall. Photograph by Gary Cziko

as four rooms. Each room's temperature can be controlled separately. Ductless mini-splits are an especially good choice for homes without forced air ducting systems or with leaky or undersized ductwork. Heat pumps can also be a supplemental source of heat in the winter.

- *Cost: approximately \$3,000 to \$10,000 (including installation)*

Central Cooling

If your home has forced air heating ductwork, it can be used for an A/C or heat pump unit. This is a good option if the ductwork is sized properly and doesn't leak, and if ducts are in unheated attics or crawlspaces that are insulated. In some locations in the U.S., contractors can install evaporative cooling as a whole house system.

- *Cost: Approximately \$3,000 to \$7,000 (not including repairs to ductwork)*

As always, you can save energy and money by purchasing EnergyStar-rated appliances and collecting a few quotes from licensed contractors.

We hope this information on home cooling options will start you on the path to a more comfortable home this summer.

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— J. Fitzgerald, VA

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Add a little sweetness to any occasion

It's almost impossible to beat the appeal of a delicious, homemade cake. Be sure to try these popular cakes when you are having family and friends over for any occasion.

These cakes are perfect for any get-together, families looking for an after-dinner indulgence or anyone who just loves desserts. They're delectable enough for fancy occasions, but also simple enough to make at home for just a couple.

This delicious recipe for Apple Cake highlights the crisp fruit but also the cinnamon sugar-flavored pastry. It's luscious but doesn't overdo it on the sweet meter with just the right mix of flavors.

This Carrot Cake recipe is a traditional take on the timeless treat and created using everyday ingredients.

Recipes provided by Culinary.net.



Carrot Cake

- 2 1/4 cups flour**
- 1 teaspoon baking soda**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon**
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder**
- 1 cup vegetable oil**
- 1 1/4 cups sugar**
- 3 eggs**
- 1 1/2 cups carrots, shredded**
- 1 cup crushed pineapple with juice**
- 2/3 cup walnuts**

Frosting:

- 2 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese**
- 3/4 cup butter, softened**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 5 1/2 cups powdered sugar**

Heat oven to 350 F.

In large bowl, sift flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and baking powder.

In mixing bowl, cream together oil and sugar. Add eggs one at a time. Gradually add in carrots and crushed pineapple.

Add dry mixture to wet ingredients and beat until smooth. Fold in walnuts.

Pour batter into two lightly greased 8-inch round cake pans and bake 25-30 minutes, or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Allow cakes to cool completely. Remove cakes from pans and slice off tops to level cakes.

To make frosting: In mixing bowl, cream together cream cheese, butter and vanilla. Gradually add in powdered sugar and mix until smooth.

Spread two large spoonfuls frosting over top of one cake and stack second cake on top. Frost entire cake with remaining frosting.



Apple Cake

- 3 cups Honeycrisp apples, peeled, cored and diced**
- 3 teaspoons cinnamon**
- 6 tablespoons, plus 2 cups, sugar, divided**
- 3 cups flour**
- 3 teaspoons baking powder**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 1 cup oil**
- 4 eggs, beaten**
- 1/4 cup orange juice**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla icing (optional)**

Heat oven to 350 F.

In medium bowl, mix apples, cinnamon and 5 tablespoons sugar until combined. Set aside.

In large bowl, mix flour, 2 cups sugar, baking powder and salt until combined. Form well in middle of mixture. Add oil, eggs, orange juice and vanilla; mix until blended.

In springform pan, pour half of batter. Add apple mixture. Pour remaining batter over apple mixture. Sprinkle remaining sugar over batter.

Bake 40-50 minutes, or until top is golden brown and tester comes out clean and dry.

Drizzle with icing, if desired.

Chicken Tetrazzini

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 lg. chicken breasts, skin on 1 onion, cut in quarters 4 chicken flavored bouillon cubes 4 cans Campbell's soup: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cream of tomato 1 cream of celery 1 cream of mushroom 1 cream of chicken | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 16 oz. bag elbow macaroni 1 stick of butter 4 7 oz. cans of whole mushrooms, drained 2 onion, diced 2 green peppers, diced 2 Colby cheese bars, cut in strips |
|---|--|

In crockpot place chicken breast and cover with water. Put in quartered onion and bouillon cubes. Slow cook for 8 hours. Remove chicken and onion quarters. Pour broth in 3-quart saucepan to boil macaroni. (If needed add more water.) Cook until al dente – do not overcook. Drain in strainer. Sauté onion and green peppers in butter until tender. Cut chicken in bite-size pieces. Put in large mixing bowl. Add drained macaroni, soups and sautéed onions, mushrooms, and peppers. Mix well. Pour into large roasting pan. Cover with foil. Put in 350-degree oven for 45 minutes. Remove from oven and add cheese strips. Put back in oven uncovered for 5 minutes. This will be one of your family's favorites. The combination of the four soups makes it very flavorful.

Phyllis Broadfoot, Kearney Nebraska

No Cream Asparagus Soup

- 2 tablespoons butter**
- 2 medium onions**
- 2 medium leeks (white and pale green parts only)**
- 6 cups chicken broth**
- 2 lbs. asparagus, ends trimmed, cut in 4 pieces**

Melt butter in large pot over medium heat. Add onion and leeks, sauté until tender, about 15 minutes. Add stock and asparagus. Simmer until asparagus is tender, about 15 minutes. Puree soup in blender in batches. Return to pot. Season with salt and pepper. Bring to simmer before serving. Can be made 1 day ahead.

Robbi DeWeese, Amherst, Nebraska

Woolworth Five & Dime Store Strawberry Pie

- 2 cups sugar**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 1/4 cup cornstarch**
- 2 cups water**
- 1/3 cup white Karo syrup**

In a saucepan, mix together sugar, salt and cornstarch. Add water and Karo syrup. Bring to a boil. Cook until mixture is clear and remove from heat. Add 3 oz package of strawberry Jell-O and a small amount of red food color. Let cool. When cooled add fresh strawberries. Put in 2 baked pie shells. Serve with whip cream.

Bev Young, Dannebrog, Nebraska

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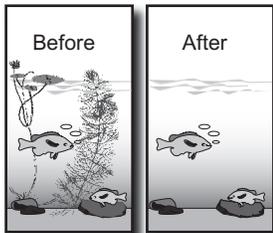
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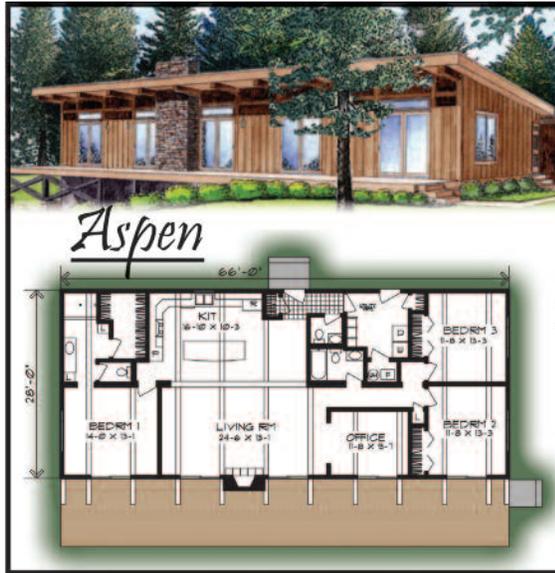
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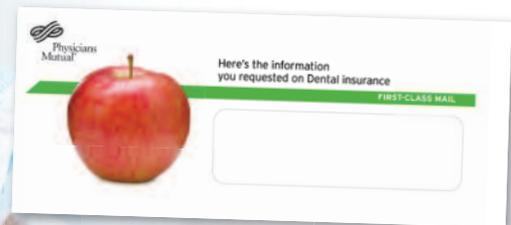
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While the need for controlled, rolling power outages prevented more serious, long-term outages, we know weathering this event wouldn't have been possible without your understanding and commitment to conserve energy. Your actions helped minimize service interruptions during this unprecedented event, and **we are grateful and honored to serve you.**



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Offer for new and qualifying former customers only. Important Terms and Conditions: Qualification: Advertised price requires credit qualification and 24-month commitment. Upfront activation and/or receiver upgrade fees may apply based on credit qualification. Offer ends 7/14/21. 2-Year Commitment: Early termination fee of \$20/mo. remaining applies if you cancel early. Included in 2-year price guarantee at \$59.99 advertised price: America's Top 120 programming package, local channels, HD service fees, and Hopper Duo Smart DVR for 1 TV. Included in 2-year price guarantee for additional cost: Programming package upgrades (\$79.99 for AT120+, \$89.99 for AT200, \$99.99 for AT250), monthly fees for upgraded or additional receivers (\$5-\$7 per additional TV, receivers with additional functionality may be \$10-\$15). Regional Sports: RSN Surcharge up to \$3/mo. applies to AT120+ and higher packages and varies based on location. NOT included in 2-year price guarantee or advertised price (and subject to change): Taxes & surcharges, add-on programming (including premium channels), DISH Protect, and transactional fees. Premium Channels: 3 Mos. Free: After 3 mos., you will be billed \$30/mo. for Showtime, Starz, and DISH Movie Pack unless you call or go online to cancel. Remote: The DISH Voice Remote with the Google Assistant requires internet-connected Hopper, Joey, or Wally device. Customer must press Voice Remote button to activate feature. The Google Assistant Smart Home features require Google account and compatible devices. Google is a trademark of Google LLC. Other: Netflix streaming membership required. All packages, programming, features, and functionality and all prices and fees not included in price lock are subject to change without notice. After 6 mos., if selected, you will be billed \$9.99/mo. for DISH Protect Silver unless you call to cancel. After 2 years, then-current everyday prices for all services apply. For business customers, additional monthly fees may apply. Free standard professional installation only. Indiana C.P.D Reg. No. - 19-08615. ©2021 GoDISH.com. All rights reserved. Internet speeds, prices, and providers vary by customer address. \$40 price refers to widely available plan from multiple providers. Restrictions apply. Nationwide availability of 25 Mbps plan is subject to change without notice. The application of "Unlimited Data with no Hard Data Limits" varies by provider, but commonly mean that your access to the internet will not be stopped by going over a data limit, but that speeds may be lowered. Call for details. Internet not provided by DISH and will be billed separately.