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Magazine



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Norris Public Power District

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Across Nebraska, public power employees go beyond restoring electricity during storms by dedicating their time and talents to volunteering as firefighters, coaches, EMTs, mentors, and community leaders in the towns they serve.

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ON THE COVER

A humming bird feeds on a salvia plant. Photograph by Scott Casper



Wayne Price

Nebraska's Power Starts Locally

Board meetings rarely draw a crowd. There are no flashing lights or breaking news alerts. Yet across Nebraska, these quiet gatherings are where some of the most important decisions are made. Local utility boards, made up of neighbors and community leaders, shape how electricity is delivered, maintained, and paid for. This is local control in its purest form, and it remains one of the strengths of the state's public power system.

In Nebraska, public power means decisions are not handed down from distant corporate offices. They are made by people who live in the same towns, drive the same roads, and face the same challenges as the customers they serve. These board members weigh choices about rates, reliability, and long-term investments with a clear understanding of how those decisions will affect their own communities. That connection matters. It keeps priorities grounded and accountability close to home.

The value of this system becomes even clearer when looking at the people who dedicate their time to it. Consider Don Larsen, who has served on the Northeast Power Board of Directors for 50 years. Since joining in 1976, Larsen has helped guide the utility through decades of change, growth, and new demands. His leadership has included time as board president, where he played a key role in shaping long-term planning and supporting investments in infrastructure.



Don Larsen

Larsen's career reflects what local control can achieve when it is paired with commitment and experience. Over five decades, he has helped ensure that reliable and affordable electricity remains available to the communities Northeast Power serves. His work has not been about headlines. It has been about steady leadership, careful decisions, and a focus on what is best for the people around him.

Stories like Larsen's are repeated across the state. Board members volunteer countless hours reviewing budgets, planning for future needs, and responding to challenges such as storms or rising costs. They bring practical knowledge and a sense of responsibility that cannot be replicated from afar.

Local control is not just a structure. It is a promise that decisions will reflect the values of the people who live with them every day. In a world that often feels distant and disconnected, Nebraska's public power model remains rooted in community. And in those modest boardrooms, neighbors continue to make choices that keep the lights on and the future bright.

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Bruce Vitosh

Bruce Vitosh is the General Manager of Norris Public Power District, headquartered in Beatrice, Neb.

Nebraska Rural Systems Focus on Cost-Effective Power

Electricity in Nebraska stands out as an exceptional value, with Nebraska rural public power districts and electric cooperatives (Nebraska rural systems) consistently delivering reliable, cost-effective power to the communities they serve. While reviewing a sampling of mission statements from Nebraska rural systems, each included a reference to low-cost, competitive prices, cost-effective, affordable, economical, or cost-based electricity. Are Nebraska rural systems fulfilling their commitment to provide low-cost electricity to their customers? Absolutely.

According to the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, the median residential electricity cost per kilowatt-hour for Nebraska rural systems is 11.0 cents, or more than 20% better than the nationwide median of 14.1 cents.

Electricity continues to be an extremely great value for Nebraska and rural systems nationwide. Since 2010, average monthly residential electric bills have only increased \$16, and when inflation is considered, the average monthly bill has actually decreased \$26. This data demonstrates that overall inflation has outpaced the increase in electricity costs for households.

The single largest expense for rural systems is power costs, which they have little control over, as they contractually depend on generation and transmission organizations to provide reliable and low-cost power. Revenues collected from customers recover both power and other controllable costs. These costs are allocated to customer classes based on the cost of service and are collected through customer, demand, and energy charges. Rates for these charges are determined on how customers impact the costs incurred on their behalf.

Other applicable charges collected through electric bills are determined by the Nebraska state legislature or local communities and are not the responsibility of individual power systems. Unless a customer qualifies for a sales tax exemption, Nebraska rural systems are required to collect a state sales tax of 5.5% and a community sales tax, as determined by the local community, which typically ranges from 0.5% to 2.0% on gross revenues.

State statutes require that Nebraska rural systems collect a gross revenue tax of 5.0% on revenues received from customers located within the corporate limits of incorporated communities. The gross revenue tax collected is paid to the county treasurer, who distributes the funds proportionally based on the mill levy of the taxing authorities within those communities.

For communities that lease their electric system to a Nebraska rural system, lease agreement fees are calculated on gross revenues received from customers

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By LaRayne Topp

Drone Displays Dazzle Crowds Nationwide

Wiz is the sound kites make when they're released hundreds of feet in the air on miles of string attached to an electric power drill. Wiz is the way pop bottle rockets sound when they erupt from the ground to explode overhead. And a Wiz is how coworkers describe their boss, Don Wisnieski.

It's not surprising that Wisnieski, owner and CEO of Fantasy Drones, grew up making things fly. Fantasy Drone Shows, based in Norfolk, Nebraska, creates choreographed, high-tech, lighted drone displays for concerts, weddings and sporting events nationwide, lighting up colorful 3D shapes in the night sky. Before Fantasy Drones there were fireworks, and today, Wisnieski says, he has no hobbies other than blowing things up.

But for Wiz, his soaring path to drones has been an evolution. He worked construction for three decades, beginning in 1986, as the owner of Wisnieski Construction. He also spent time in other occupations: a grave digger (some 8,000 of them), curb grinder, snow remover, and insulation installer, all small companies Wiz began.

"I find a niche and then I go for it," Wiz said. "Something different all the time."

In the early 1990s, he became involved with the Norfolk JC's which staged a bang-up fireworks display each year.

It brought Wiz back to his childhood when the Fourth of July was bigger than Christmas. The Wisnieski family



hosted a big party on their family farm each year where two galvanized water-filled tanks kept the watermelon cool along with the beer. Half of Dodge turned out for it, Wiz explained, and everyone was encouraged to bring fireworks.

Twenty dollars bought a lot of fireworks then.

In 1996, Wiz became chairman of the JC fireworks, and by 2001, that fireworks display metamorphosed into Norfolk's Big Bang Boom, attracting as many as 30,000 visitors. This year, in fact, the event will be celebrating its 50th anniversary. Wisnieski began branching out, setting up fireworks at various places, but none bigger than Norfolk's annual festivities.

About five years ago, airborne drones became "a thing," and Wiz turned his attention in that direction.



“The same customers who asked for fireworks, asked for drones,” Wiz said. He’d been working with J & M Displays out of Iowa at the time, who said Wiz could do the drones; J & M Displays would stick with fireworks. Establishing a drone show wasn’t cheap, Wis said; it was a real investment. But Wiz who is willing to try his hand at anything new, provided it’s fun, jumped in with both feet.

Fortunately, in the words of Fantasy Drones designer Scott Buss, “There’s nothing about Fantasy Drones that isn’t fun.”

Wiz and wife/business manager Jolene started out by ordering 100 drones; then added another 60. Fantasy

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Center: Don and Jolene Wisnieski are determined to keep the fantasy sparking in their drone shows, at times utilizing as many as 18,000 different colors to make that happen.

Top: Fantasy Drones collaborated with Fireworks by Grucci to launch a drone show celebrating the 250th anniversary of America’s Declaration of Independence.

Middle: More than 3,000 drones promoted the series, “Monarch: Legend of Monsters” at the world’s tallest drone show in Los Angeles.

Bottom: Eighteen to 22 different scenes, many animated, are typically incorporated into each show.

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Drones continued expanding, establishing a second division in Dayton, Ohio. Ten staff share their time between the two locations including designers, certified and licensed pilots, and launch teams. About 30 sales people work market shows and fair conventions, showcasing just what Fantasy Drones can do to bring excitement to any event.

Today, at a typical show, Fantasy Drones will have as many as 300 drones in the air at once. At times the drones begin their work in a scattered launch, with various flight paths and utilizing an astounding 18,000 different colors. When drones aren't in use they will hover in the sky's background, 20 to 30 yards behind the remainder, until they're called into the spotlight once again.

After months of meetings, Fantasy Drone computer wizards and designers come up with a story board rendering. For a typical 14-minute show, with 1 ½ scenes per minute, 18 to 22 different scenes, many of them animated, are incorporated into each show.

"It's like 200 pegs on a Lite Brite," Wiz explained, referring to a child's toy.

They use Google maps and other components to determine free air space above their desired show locations, await client approval, and sponsor by-in. Once they get the go-ahead and travel to the show site, they set up a ground station to communicate with the drones, and measure off and tape down a grid to lay the drones onto.

Once all the work is completed, a crew member pushes a button and then all sit back to enjoy. It takes only 15 minutes for the drones to tell the story, according to Buss.

"We watch the same show you do," Wiz said. "We want it to go perfect," and his gut, he said, takes the brunt of it.

In spite of that, Wiz truly loves the excitement of each new project. When Nebraska University's Cornhuskers took on the Omaha Mavericks at Memorial Stadium at the 2023 Volleyball Day, naturally Wiz wanted to be involved.

They'd been setting off fireworks at Husker games for the past 20 years. Wiz procured an audience with UN-L head coach Jon Cook, and the Fantasy Drone crew laid out their design, shown from the vantage point of the



"Wiz" checks cases of drones lined up in the Fantasy Drones warehouse.

50-yard line.

"We offered the ultimate fan experience," Wiz said, "and we had one shot."

Cook's response? "That's sick! Make it happen."

So, they did.

Set to a University soundtrack chanting "Go Huskers," the drone show featured a rotating volleyball, a dancing red "N" and the numbers 92,003 representing the world record-breaking count of attendees at a women's sporting event, all amid a backdrop of exploding fireworks.

Then Fantasy Drones took their shows one step further, launching pyrotechnics on the backs of drones once they're in the air, known as pyrodrones.

In 2025, Fantasy Drones, in partnership with Warner Brothers, staged a drone show to promote the theater release of the movie, Superman. Highlighting the Fourth

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of July celebration on the St. Louis riverfront, four hundred drones displayed Superman, Krypto and the Fortress of Solitude, all near the Gateway Arch.

In a dramatic rising of the curtain of the 250th anniversary of the country's declaration of independence, Fantasy Drones collaborated with Fireworks by Grucci to launch a major 2025 New Year's Eve drone show over the Tropicana at the Las Vegas Strip. Fireworks by Grucci is one of the nation's premier pyrotechnics firms, originating in 1850. At the stroke of midnight, 600 drones became spinning roulette wheels and dice, all integrated with traditional fireworks.

More recently, in February of 2026, a record-breaking 3,000 plus drone show for Apple TV took to the Los Angeles sky to promote the series, "Monarch: Legacy of Monsters." The 600-foot-tall spectacle not only set a world record for the tallest drone show, but also featured Godzilla, Kong and a Titan battle in the skies over Hollywood's Forever Cemetery.

The show's pyrodrones did battle over the final resting places of stars such as Burt Reynolds and Judy Garland, Wiz said. The show set a Guinness World Record the tallest aerial depiction of a fictional character.

A little closer to home and more down to earth,

employees of Nebraska's power districts have become certified to fly drones equipped with cameras, using them to patrol lines and complete other maintenance tasks. Elkhorn Rural Public Power District in Battle Creek is one of them. Manager Mark Johnson said that Elkhorn RPPD has been utilizing drones for the past half dozen years.

Four Elkhorn employees are licensed to operate the company's drone, utilizing it for line inspections for maintenance, or periodically, if there's an issue, or for building lines across areas such a creek.

When there's a blink, Johnson said, the drone will fly the lines. They're helpful, save on manual labor, and give an idea of what's going on up high, things the human eyes can't see from the ground.

Drones are especially useful at locations such as sub transmission lines, where poles are tall and the workings of the station hard to see. The photographs taken by the drones are integrated into review maps, available for FEMA intervention if a storm moves through.

The electrical service for Fantasy Drones' workshop is provided by Stanton County Public Power District. Fantasy Drones also occasionally offers the services of several of its drones, those with cameras attached, to realtors looking at possible investments or farmers looking for possible missing cows.

Drones, like Don "Wiz" Wisnieski, are always looking for something, as long as it's fun.



Drones await their turn to fly, lined up in a grid before each show.



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With power strips and outlet converters (a multiple outlet “bar” plugged directly into an existing outlet), we can plug in multiple items in or near the same outlet.

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Just like chocolate consumed in excess can overload your body with too many calories, attempting to draw too much power from an outlet or circuit can overload your home's electrical system. Depending on how your home is wired, you may get away with it — or you may not. If too much current is drawn, usually a circuit breaker would trip or fuses would blow, but this is never guaranteed.

The results of overloading a circuit could range from a damaged appliance to starting a fire. That is because when too much electrical current flows through a circuit, things can overheat. Whether it is a wire, an outlet, or any other part along the electrical path, excess heat can cause serious problems.

When in doubt, have a qualified electrician assess your home, and mention any odd symptoms you may notice, like flickering or dimming lights.



DON'T PLUG THESE 15 THINGS INTO A POWER STRIP

It is fine to plug in some things into a power strip, such as computers, lamps, phones and other light-load electronics.

However, appliances that require a lot of power should not be plugged into a power strip. Do not use a power strip with the following appliances:

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- × Microwave ovens
- × Toasters
- × Coffee makers
- × Blenders
- × Slow cookers
- × Rice cookers

IN THE BATHROOM


- × Hair dryers
- × Curling irons
- × Other hairstyling tools

IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM

- × Washing machines
- × Dryers

ANYWHERE

- × Sump pumps
- × Space heaters
- × Portable air conditioners

 Do not overload power strips by plugging in appliances that consume more watts than the cord can handle. This can cause the power strip to overheat or start a fire.

 Learn more at: [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org)

By Natalie Jones

Nebraska Wildfire Tracker



*A charred tree trunk stands in a burnt section of the Nebraska Sandhills.
Photograph by Marissa Lindemann | Platte Basin Timelapse*

Following historic wildfires that have burned nearly one million acres of Nebraska grazing lands this spring, the University of Nebraska–Lincoln has launched a new online hub that integrates science, mapping and field-based documentation in one place.

The resource — the first of its kind focused on working grasslands — is designed to track and monitor long-term recovery while supporting farmers, ranchers and land managers as they restore Nebraska’s native grasslands.

Built through the integration of Nebraska Extension and university research programs, the platform combines scientific data, decision-support tools and applied guidance to help producers navigate recovery following wildfire.

“Wildfire recovery unfolds over years, not months,” said Dirac Twidwell, rangeland ecologist at Nebraska.

“What we’ve built here is not just a map of fires — it’s a system that helps people understand recovery, anticipate change and respond with better information.”

The hub is informed by decades of research and monitoring.

Twidwell’s lab has studied and cataloged more than 1,300 wildfires across the Great Plains since 1985, building one of the most comprehensive datasets on wildfire and recovery in the region. That work now powers the platform’s interactive tools, allowing users to explore wildfire history and recovery patterns over time.

“Each mapped polygon represents a wildfire dating back to 1985,” Twidwell said. “That long-term record lets us see how grasslands actually recover — across different weather patterns, management decisions and landscapes — and that perspective is critical for making sound decisions today.”

Through the platform, users can:

- Explore where and when wildfires have occurred across Nebraska since 1985;
- View wildfire perimeters and details such as year, size and fire name;
- Analyze how vegetation responds before and after wildfire using time-based graphs;
- Compare current conditions to past wildfire patterns;
- Identify similar past wildfire events to inform recovery decisions.

The tool integrates long-term wildfire records with remotely sensed vegetation data, allowing users to evaluate how grasslands recover over time. Vegetation response is displayed through graphs comparing pre- and post-wildfire conditions, helping producers assess recovery timelines and variability.

The platform goes beyond visualization of past fires, integrating decades of Nebraska research into practical guidance for rangeland, livestock, crop and water systems, connecting science directly to management decisions. It also links users to Nebraska Extension educators and partner networks, making it easier to access technical expertise, find local contacts and identify upcoming field days and workshops.

The initiative includes a new post-wildfire monitoring approach that connects research expectations with landowner engagement while coordinating future research efforts to improve recovery outcomes across the state.

University research has also shown an increase in large wildfires across Nebraska and the Great Plains, underscoring the need for long-term recovery planning and improved decision-support systems.

<https://wildfire.unl.edu/>

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located within the community's service territory and are set by the local council or board, typically ranging from 5.0% to 12.0%. Nebraska rural systems return 100% of the lease fees collected to the communities for use at the discretion of the local governing body.

In a time of rising costs, Nebraska rural systems remain focused on delivering reliable, cost-effective power. By managing expenses responsibly and carefully considering the impact of rates on customers, Nebraska rural systems continue to deliver reliable service while preserving the value electricity provides to the customers and communities they serve.



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Community Service Powers Public Power Employees

When the power goes out in a Nebraska storm, public power district crews are often the first to respond. What many people may not realize is that when those same crews clock out, they continue serving their communities in a different way — as volunteers.

Across the state, employees of Nebraska's public power districts wear many hats. In small towns especially, the line between job and community is often blurred, and service becomes a way of life.

In north-central Nebraska, several employees from Niobrara Electric are also volunteer firefighters. Line foreman Justin Huston, journeyman lineman Shawn Leimser, and project manager Doug Lytle all answer emergency calls, putting their training and teamwork to use in high-pressure situations. Their day jobs already demand quick thinking and a focus on safety, skills that translate naturally to the fire line.

That same spirit carries across other districts. At KBR Rural Public Power District, Foreman Tim Murphy and Engineer Jason Vaisvilas serve on the Valentine Volunteer Fire Department, while Brandon Evans and Cameron Koch respond to calls in Ainsworth. Evans also volunteers as an EMT and stays active in the Elks, while Koch supports conservation efforts through Pheasants Forever. These commitments show how public power employees often extend their impact beyond a single role.

In Butler County, the list of community involvement is especially long. Employees coach youth baseball, serve on fair boards, lead church groups, and hold positions on city councils and rural fire boards. Scott Hlavac stands out for his wide-ranging service, from firefighting and EMS training to coaching Legion baseball. His involvement reflects a broader culture where stepping up is simply expected.

Employees of Northwest Rural Public Power District and Roosevelt Public Power District dedicate time to mentoring young athletes. Whether coaching wrestling in Mitchell or youth football in Scottsbluff and Gering, these workers help shape the next generation. Northwest RPPD Staking Engineer Brad Johnson lends a hand to the Hay Springs junior wrestling team and Roosevelt PPD Journeyman lineman Darryn Walters volunteers as a wrestling coach for the Mitchell schools.

Community service also takes quieter forms. In Cuming County, employees volunteer in churches, libraries, and schools. Some lead youth groups, while others organize local events or even read to elderly neighbors losing their eyesight. Kari Haase, Cuming County Public Power District Assistant General Manager/CFO, is a member of the West Point Optimist Club and Past President of the West Point Community Foundation. Jess Hunke, Cuming County Public Power District Working Foreman, coaches 3rd Grade Girls Basketball.

McCook PPD Lead Lineman Skyler Kalinski serves as the head coach of the McCook High School wrestling team. He also serves as a member of the wrestling club board and AAU wrestling voting board. These acts may not make headlines, but they are vital to maintaining strong community bonds.

The volunteers listed are just a small sample of the employees of Nebraska's public power districts and electric cooperatives who share their time and talents within their communities.

From fighting fires to coaching little league, Nebraska's public power employees demonstrate a deep commitment to the places they call home. Keeping the lights on may be their profession, but strengthening their communities is clearly their purpose.



After a chilling winter, summertime is here! Kids are enjoying summer vacation, the weather is warm, the grill is hot and the pools are cool. Time to make sure our children and family members remember to have fun and be safe at the same time.

Children often do not understand the dangers of electricity. Take some time to get down and view the surroundings from a child's vantage point to locate possible hazards.

For safety outdoors, Safe Electricity recommends that children and adults follow these rules:

- Stay away from electrical equipment on the ground and overhead. Never climb a utility pole or tower. Don't play on or around pad-mounted electrical equipment. Electrical power poles and utility equipment should never be used as a playground.
- Never climb trees near power



Never go into an electric substation. Electric substations contain high-voltage equipment, which can kill you. Don't retrieve a toy or rescue a pet that goes inside. Call your electric utility instead.

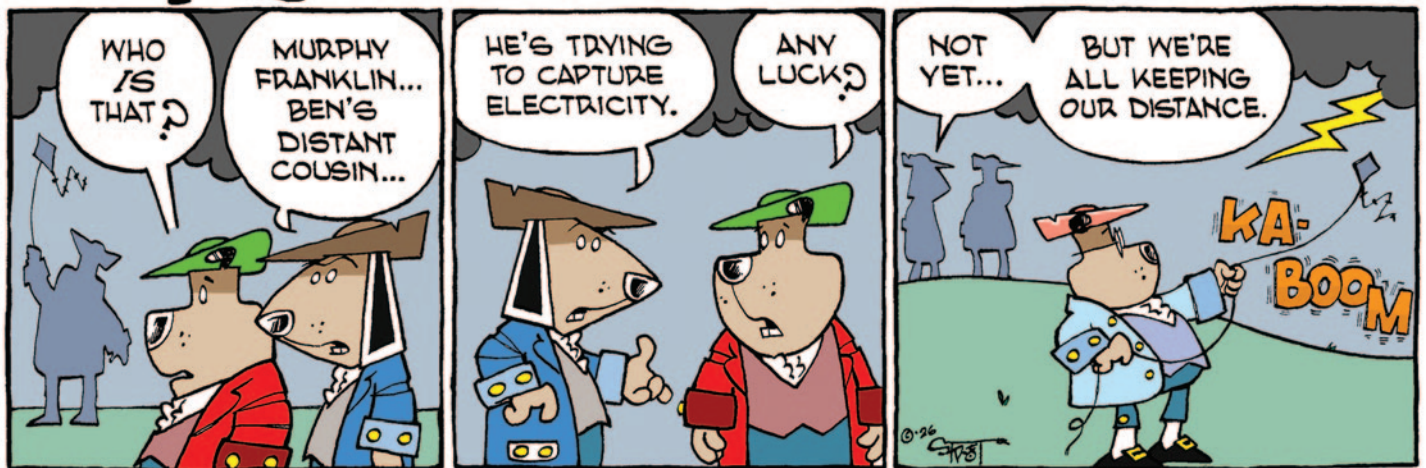
lines. Even if the power lines aren't touching the tree, they could touch when more weight is added to the branch.

- Fly kites and model airplanes safely away from trees and overhead power lines. If a kite gets tangled in a tree that's near power lines, don't climb up to get it. Contact your electric utility for assistance.
- Look up and around you. Always be aware of the location of power lines, particularly when using long metal tools like ladders and pool skimmers.

- Water and electricity never mix! Keep electronics like radios away from pools and hot tubs, and watch for overhead power lines when cleaning pools, sailing or fishing. Never install pools underneath or near power lines.
- Never touch an electrical appliance if you are wet; always dry off completely.

Summer can signal an increase in accidents and injuries. Keep utility and emergency numbers close at hand.

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Peak demand is the period in a given range of time—day, month or year—when electricity use is highest. It's caused by many people using energy-consuming equipment at the same time. It differs based on geography, weather and time of year. For example, demand is typically highest on hot summer afternoons and cold winter mornings. Most utilities also experience daily peaks when people are getting ready in the mornings and returning home in the evenings

When everyone uses more energy at the same time, it puts more stress on the electric grid and requires more expensive electricity to meet the need. Electricity pricing is based on supply and demand. The price of electricity is higher when the demand is higher, which costs the utility more.

To lower energy use and strain on the grid during peak times, there are habits we can adopt in our homes.

Let's look at two examples.

Joe and John arrive home from work at 5:30 p.m. They both turn on the oven to make dinner.

While John waits for the oven to preheat, he throws in a load of laundry. He finishes dinner, cleans up and starts the dishwasher. Then, he moves the clothes to the dryer.

Joe finishes dinner, loads the dishwasher and sets it to start at 10 p.m. He puts a load of laundry in the washing machine and later that evening switches it over to the dryer.

Although they use the same appliances and amount of energy, John uses it all at once, running multiple appliances during peak hours, creating higher demand and more strain on the electric grid while using more expensive energy.

To lower your demand, spread electricity use throughout the day and avoid peak times as much as possible. This will reduce the utility's cost of supplying electricity to your home. Another benefit of shifting your use to midday is integrating renewable energy, such as solar, which produces energy when the sun is shining.



An induction stove top uses electromagnetic heating technology to heat the cookware. Only specific cookware can be used on an induction stove top. Photograph provided by KitchenAid

Large appliances—including washers, dryers, ovens, water heaters and air conditioners—have the biggest impact. Using them during off-peak hours or one at a time can help.

Automate as much as possible. Most electric vehicle chargers can be set to charge during scheduled hours with built-in timers or apps. Most modern dishwashers have delay-start features. If you have a pool, set the pool pump to run in the middle of the day, particularly if you are in a region with strong solar production.

You can also automate air conditioning. Some utilities offer programs that precool homes during off-peak hours to reduce demand during peak times. Simple, free adjustments, such as closing your curtains on hot afternoons and evenings, can help, too.

Keep in mind that extreme weather puts extra stress on the grid. Taking it easy on your energy use during extreme weather events can help prevent outages.

Spreading out your energy use helps your utility keep costs down and benefits your local energy grid.



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TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Always be cautious of unsolicited calls (or in-person visits) to your home from companies claiming to conduct energy audits. These are typically telemarketing firms that claim to be a third-party company or pose as a representative from your electric utility to gain access to homes and sell services with the promise of government rebates. Many electric utilities provide energy audit services, but they are typically scheduled at the customer's request.

Source: Better Business Bureau



HOMETOWN EATS

THE HAYBARN BEEMER, NEB.



For more than two decades, The Haybarn in Beemer, Neb., has been a favorite gathering place for families, friends, and hungry travelers. Known for its fresh burgers and welcoming atmosphere, the local bar and grill has become a familiar stop for people across northeast Nebraska.

Owner Ashlee Feyerherm (pictured top left) first bought The Haybarn in the summer of 2000. Although she sold the business in 2015, she never lost her connection to it. Four years later, she became the owner once again. Originally from Wisner, Feyerherm now lives in West Point with her husband and says The Haybarn has always been part of the community for as long as she can remember.

Running a small-town restaurant means wearing many hats. Feyerherm spends her days cooking, bartending, and helping wherever needed. “I work wherever I need to be,” she said.

The Haybarn is especially known for its burgers, with fresh patties prepared daily. Customers can also enjoy salads, baskets, sandwiches, wings, and weekly specials. Mexican night on Wednesdays and wing specials on Thursdays bring in many regular customers from Beemer, Pender, Wisner, West Point, and Bancroft.

The restaurant has three part-time employees, all from the local area. Feyerherm says the people who walk through the doors each day keep her motivated. “Nine times out of 10 when people walk in, I know them,” she said. She also appreciates the strong support from surrounding communities.

Unlike many late-night bars, The Haybarn focuses on being family-friendly and food-centered. The business is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., giving



customers a comfortable place to gather, share a meal, and catch up with neighbors.

For many folks in northeast Nebraska, The Haybarn is more than a restaurant. It is a hometown tradition. It is served electrically by Cuming County Public Power District.



Mississippi Mud Cake

- 1 chocolate cake mix (15 1/4 ounces)
- 1 1/4 cups water
- 1/3 cup canola oil
- 1/3 cup creamy peanut butter
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate pieces
- 1 can (16 ounces) chocolate fudge frosting
- 1 bag (16 ounces) miniature marshmallows
- 1 cup chopped pecans

Heat oven to 350 F.

Grease 13-by-9-by-2-inch baking pan.

In large bowl, using electric mixer on low speed, combine cake mix, water, oil, peanut butter and eggs. Stir in chocolate pieces. Pour into prepared pan.

Bake 30-35 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center of cake comes out clean.

Pour marshmallows over top of cake. Return to oven and bake 2-3 minutes, or until marshmallows are somewhat melted.

In microwave-safe bowl, melt fudge frosting in microwave.

Drizzle frosting over melted marshmallows.

Sprinkle pecan pieces over frosting.

Allow cake to cool completely before serving.

Cucumber Muffins

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 3 cups shredded cucumber | 2 teaspoons baking soda |
| 1 2/3 cups sugar | 1 teaspoon of salt |
| 2/3 cup vegetable oil | 1 teaspoon of cinnamon |
| 2 teaspoons vanilla | 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves |
| 4 eggs | 1/2 teaspoon baking powder |
| 3 cups flour | |

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix cucumber, sugar, oil, vanilla, and eggs. Stir in remaining ingredients. Grease bottom of muffin tin or use baking cups and fill 3/4 full of muffin mix. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes. This recipe was adapted from Zucchini Bread recipe from Betty Crocker's 40th Anniversary Edition cookbook.

Lori Carper, West Point, Nebraska

Freezer Tomato Sauce

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 20 large tomatoes | 1 green pepper, chopped |
| 4 onions, chopped | 1/2 cup chopped parsley |
| 4 carrots, shredded | 1 teaspoon black pepper |
| 4 ribs of celery, diced | 2 tablespoons salt |

In a large pot, put all ingredients with enough water to cover the vegetables and simmer for 20 minutes. Then let it cool slightly. Put in a blender and blend well. Put in containers and freeze.

Norma Jones, Neligh, Nebraska

Chow Lupe

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3 lbs. Pork Loin Roast | 1 tablespoons Cumin Seed |
| 1 lb. Pinto Beans, washed well | 1 tablespoons Oregano |
| 2 Garlic Pods, chopped | 1 can Long Green Chilies |
| 2 tablespoons Chili Powder | 1 1/2 tablespoons Salt |

Put all ingredients in a large pan. Cover with water; cook for 6 hours with the lid on. Remove meat and chop; remove any bone. Add meat back to pan and cook one more hour with the lid off. Serve with Doritos topped with shredded lettuce, tomatoes, cheese and onions. Or use as a meat filling for tacos on flour or corn tortillas, topped with lettuce, tomatoes, onions and cheese. This is so good leftover.

Linda Gillett, Edison, Nebraska

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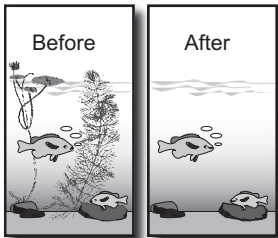
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