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# NEBRASKAN

April 2019







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RURAL ELECTRIC  
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Custer Public Power District Lead Lineman Ron Baillie, left, and Journeyman Lineman Dan Mankle load a power pole on to a trailer. See related article on Page 14. Photograph by Faye Zmek Photography



by Wayne Price

## Get rid of dangerous lint in the dryer

**M**ost people don't think about the clothes dryer as being scary or potentially dangerous lurking inside the home. Unfortunately, clothes dryers cause over 20,000 house fires every year, resulting in millions of dollars in damage. You can protect your family and your home by doing a little regular cleaning and maintenance.

It doesn't matter if you have an electric or gas clothes dryer, you will have dryer lint. Lint will build up in the lint trap, but it will also collect inside the dryer vent and ductwork. This can cause a reduction of air flow and drying efficiency. Lint is also responsible for causing humidity levels to increase around vents and ductwork which can cause mildew and mold to develop in walls and insulation.

The most important thing to remember about lint is that it is combustible. Lint causes fires.

Luckily, getting rid of dryer lint is simple. You probably already clean the lint trap after every load. If you don't do this, start right away. If the screen appears clogged, possibly from using dryer sheets, submerge the lint screen in hot water and clean the screen with a bristle brush to get rid of all the fabric softener residue.

Invest in a dryer lint brush from your local hardware store. This long-handled flexible brush will allow you to clean areas that you can't reach by hand.

Remove the lint filter and gently use the brush to break loose the built-up lint. Do not force the brush if you feel resistance but try to clean every surface as much as possible. Take out the large chunks of lint that get pulled out with the brush.

Replace the lint filter and run the dryer for a cycle on the "air only" setting. This will suck any remaining lint into the filter or blast the lint particles to the outside vent. It's a good idea to unplug the dryer and check the connection between the exhaust vent and the dryer at least once a year. You'll probably need a screwdriver or pliers to remove the clip or steel clamp that holds the exhaust hose in place. Reach inside the dryer opening or use the vent brush to clean out as much

lint as possible. Wipe away any remaining lint from around the connection with a damp cloth. Do the same thing with the exhaust hose.

If you still have a white or silver vinyl duct hose, it should be replaced immediately. It is flammable and if ignited by the dryer it will burn and cause a house fire. All national and local building codes now require metal ducting for clothes dryers. The best exhaust vent material is rigid aluminum tubing pieces that can be connected to reach the exhaust vent on the outside of the home. This type of tubing is better at resisting the build-up of lint and is not easily crushed. Flexible aluminum ductwork is another option but it tends to collect more lint.

The final step is to clean up the exterior vent. Like before, clean up as much lint as you can with your hand or vent brush. You may have to remove a vent flap or hold it open with a screwdriver. This vent should be cleaned several times per year.

Here are some tips for using your dryer safely:

Clothing that has been soiled by volatile chemicals like gasoline, cleaning agents or large amounts of cooking oil should not be dried in a clothes dryer. If they must be dried in the machine, wash the clothing more than once to minimize the risk of fire. Use the lowest heat setting and shortest drying cycle possible. Use a cycle with a cool-down period at the end of the cycle to prevent ignition.

Never leave a dryer running when no one is at home. Don't start a cycle right before you go to bed.

Do not store volatile chemicals or rags near a dryer. Some liquids emit vapors that could ignite. The area around the dryer should be kept free of lint, papers, and stacks of clothing.

If you suspect a fire, get everyone outside and call 911. Disconnect the power immediately or turn off the breakers if you can do so safely. Keep a fully-charged fire extinguisher in the laundry room.

If dryer vent cleaning and maintenance is not done regularly, the dryer could cause a fire by igniting the lint. Proper dryer vent cleaning will greatly reduce the risk of a fire.

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# Tri-State announces Duane Highley as next Chief Executive Officer

The Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association Board of Directors has selected Duane Highley as the cooperative wholesale power supplier's next chief executive officer. Highley, who currently serves as president and chief executive officer for Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corp., and Arkansas Electric Cooperative Inc., will succeed Mike McInnes on April 5, 2019.

Duane Highley will lead the wholesale electric power supplier's executive management team in its strategic and operational initiatives while reporting to the association's 43-member board of directors.

"As CEO, Duane will work with our board of directors to advance a strong vision for the association's future," said Rick Gordon, chairman and president of Tri-State. "Duane is a proven CEO adept at leading complex cooperative organizations. He has spent the past 35 years working with two financially strong cooperatives and demonstrates leadership collaborating with members, key stakeholders and public officials."

The Tri-State board considered several factors in the CEO selection, including a strong ability to lead, manage and advocate within the cooperative governance model. Highley demonstrated his vision for Tri-State to meet its members' needs, with the priority on continuing to deliver reliable and affordable electricity, his desire to work with all members to find solutions to current and future issues facing the association and the industry, and his ability to lead and inspire employees.

"I'm grateful to the board for their confidence and honored by the opportunity to lead this remarkable organization of dedicated and talented employees," said Highley. "Together with our board, members and staff, our association will bolster what remains our key focus – serving the needs of our members so they can



Duane Highley

deliver on their promise to rural communities across the west."

"Among a strong field of highly qualified candidates, our board of directors has confidence that Duane will continue the progress Mike

McInnes established over the last five years," said Gordon. "I want to thank Mike for his exceptional leadership as CEO. Under Mike's leadership, Tri-State is financially strong, operationally sound and well positioned for the future."

Mike McInnes became executive vice president/general manager in March 2014, and the board of directors changed his title to CEO in 2015.

"Assuming the role of Tri-State CEO was the most rewarding decision and highlight of my career, and I am grateful for our members and employees," said McInnes. "We have all worked to address the challenges of an ever-changing industry while staying true to our mission, and I am humbled by our accomplishments."

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# WHAT'S ON THAT POLE?

by Paul Wesslund

*Never nail posters of lost pets or garage sale flyers to utility poles, which can tear a lineworker's protective equipment, interfering with their safety while on the job.*



*Photograph provided by  
AdamsColumbiaEC*



# OVERHEAD GIZMOS KEEP YOU ELECTRIFIED

**H**ave you ever wondered what's on an electric utility pole? Let's go over the basics.

Utility poles are packed with electrical devices, so it's best to stay away from them. You should never nail posters of political candidates or lost pets to utility poles. Nailing or attaching things to utility poles can tear a lineworker's protective equipment, interfering with their safety while on the job.

The equipment and devices up there vary from pole to pole, but think of a utility pole as a layer cake, with the electric equipment at the top. Most noticeable of course are the wires, supported by the crossarms and/or insulators. At the highest levels, they could be high-voltage transmission wires carrying power long distances. More often what you're looking at are medium-voltage distribution lines carrying power into neighborhoods. Beneath those may be service wires with stepped-down power ready to be used in a home or business.

It's important to remember that those are bare wires, which is why you hear regular warnings to stay away if a storm knocks power lines to the ground. That's also why the wires are attached to insulators that keep them from being in contact with the wood, steel or other supporting materials.

Just below the electric lines hangs a variety of electric equipment. The big metal cans are transformers that convert high voltages to low voltages. Devices that look like stacks of big gray donuts could be protective lightning arrestors (or "reclosers") that act like a fuse or circuit breaker, shutting down the line when they detect a problem. Collections of what look like metal cereal boxes are "capacitors" that help improve the efficiency of power flow and regulate voltage. Other switches and regulators monitor and adjust the flow of electricity as energy use changes throughout the day.

Some of the lines you see might be

ground wires that carry static electricity (such as lightning) into the earth or balance the flow of power and help ensure safe operation of the system, or they could be guy wires to keep the pole straight.

The lowest layer carries non-electric lines: cable TV, telephone, internet and

traffic light controllers. There's one more layer—any of those lines might go under the ground to get to a house or meet up with other underground lines.

These are the basic parts of an electric utility pole, and now you know how poles get power to the people!

## Electricity 101: The Flip of a Switch

Have you ever wondered why they call it electricity?

It's named after those little pieces of atoms called electrons, and that's the place to start in understanding how power plants make something that reliably lights your home with the flip of a switch.

Getting all those electrons to march together inside a wire has been described as one of civilization's greatest and most complex engineering feats.

Just about all of your electricity starts with the scientific phenomenon that spinning a magnet inside a coil of wires will generate electricity. So, deep inside most power plants are large turbines that are turned in different ways: falling water at a hydroelectric dam; burning coal or natural gas at a fossil fuel station; atomic energy at a nuclear power plant; or the rotating blades of a wind turbine. One exception is solar energy, which uses materials that produce electricity when they're activated by sunlight.

Every one of those power plants is unimaginably complicated—think about what you would do if you were handed a lump of coal and were told to make it run your refrigerator.

Most large electric generating plants need large banks of transformers to boost the voltage for the cross-country trip through wires held up by tall transmission lines and towers. As it nears your neighborhood, the voltage is reduced at one of those fenced-in complexes of wires and transformers called a substation. Lower voltage makes the electricity safer for home energy use. As the electricity gets closer to your home or business, the voltage is reduced again with smaller transformers, which you can typically see mounted on a nearby utility pole or in a ground-level green box in your yard.

Beyond those basics, all that flowing electricity needs to be coordinated so it gets to the right house just as it's needed. Safety is always top priority. And line crews need to be kept organized for both routine power line maintenance as well as restoring after storm damage.

That's a lot of power in the simple flip of a switch!

# Cutting Cord Clutter

by Brian Sloboda



There's no doubt about it. Today we have more cords and cables on our tables, desks and countertops than ever before. It is an epidemic of clutter, chaos and confusion. But is there a better way?

Phones, tablets, cameras, Bluetooth devices and other gadgets give you two options for charging. You can plug them into the USB port of your computer or use the USB wall plug adapter (which always seems to disappear!) that you can plug into any outlet. Both options work fine. Unless you have a family with multiple devices. Sometimes two outlets just won't cut it.

The simple solution is to use a power strip and plug everything into that. Some power strips even come with USB ports.

Another solution is to install wall outlets that have both traditional 3 prong outlets and USB ports. This solution is simple. However, it does require replacing the existing wall outlet and some people may be uncomfortable doing this. You should

consult a licensed electrician if you have any questions.

It's worth noting that both options, power strips and wall outlets with USB ports, have two potential downsides. The first is that cords will be visible, so clutter could still be an issue. The other downside is that power strips and outlets do not have the capability to prevent overcharging or turn off power once the device is fully charged.

Several years ago, overcharging a device was a potential problem and it led to diminished battery life. However, today's modern electronics come with enough "smarts" built in to prevent overcharging. This has helped prevent damage to the battery and eliminate the dreaded vampire load. Vampire load is power used by devices when they are simply plugged in and not actually performing a task. It's essentially wasted energy.

If you are looking to tidy up charging cables and use devices like a Bluetooth speaker, you may want to invest in a USB charging station.

Charging stations allow multiple devices to be charged in a sleek and elegant tabletop station that hides the cables. You can use short USB cables that are tucked away, and the charging station plugs into an outlet, only using one cord. Some charging stations also support wireless charging for devices equipped with that capability.

Some charging stations claim to eliminate vampire load, and some also claim to offer different charging rates to different devices. Given the number of stations available both online and at big-box retailers, it's important to read the reviews and learn from the experiences of others.

The most important aspect is finding one that has enough space to accommodate your current devices and those that you may add over the coming years.

*Brian Sloboda is a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association*



# Cyber Safety Checklist

Clip and save this cybersecurity checklist to keep your computer and devices secure.

- Anti-virus software is installed and up to date.
- Passwords are complex, using a mix of upper and lower-case letters and special characters.
- Parental controls have been set on hardware and software to keep kids safe while browsing the internet.
- All software is up to date. (Check for automatic updates.)
- All devices are backed up to an external storage system. (Back up devices every few weeks.)



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Each year member-systems of the Nebraska Rural Electric Association accept applications from high school students to attend the NREA Youth Energy Leadership Camp at the State 4-H Camp in the Halsey National Forest. The 2019 Youth Energy Leadership Camp will be held July 8-12.

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

The NREA Youth Energy Leadership Camp is established as an operating power district and provides a “hands-on” approach to 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 selected by their peers to return to next year’s camp.

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 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.

## 2019 Youth Energy Leadership Camp RSVP Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Current Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parents \_\_\_\_\_

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# Deregulation doesn't work for electricity

by Paul Griffin

Yogi Berra had many witticisms, including his famous “It’s déjà vu all over again.” There couldn’t be a more appropriate phrase to describe recent attempts in states like Nevada, Arizona, Florida, and now Wyoming to deregulate electricity markets. Unfortunately, these efforts illustrate how we’ve forgotten key lessons learned when opportunistic companies like Enron sold a bill of goods to state policymakers, ultimately leaving consumers holding the bag with higher electricity rates, reduced reliability and fraudulent practices perpetrated on unsuspecting elderly and low-income consumers. Faced now with possible deregulation proposals, Wyoming legislators should recognize the harsh lessons learned in other states that have deregulated and reject these deregulation proposals.

Since the 1990s, many states have explored deregulating their

electricity markets. Deregulation means that consumers can choose their electricity supplier and that prices fluctuate with the ups and downs of wholesale costs for generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity. Theoretically, prices are left to the market. In the years since electricity deregulation first became popular, eleven states, including California and Montana, had buyer’s remorse after costly deregulation experiments failed, eventually re-regulating. In the states that remain deregulated, residential consumers often pay the highest rates in the country. Those states have also experienced rampant fraud and deception from unscrupulous energy marketers, resulting in attorneys general in Massachusetts and Illinois, after damning investigations, calling for an end to deregulated electricity markets.

Instead of being wooed by promises about “customer choice” and “free markets”, policymakers and the public should remember these facts:

1) Every year since 1997 has seen the average residential consumer in

regulated states pay a lower rate for electricity than their counterparts in deregulated states.

2) In Texas’ deregulated retail market, consumers experienced brownouts in 2011, 2014 and 2015. In 2011, rolling blackouts even forced Texas to import power from Mexico.

3) The availability of electric linemen for emergency response is a concern. After deregulation came to the electric industry, some utilities in affected jurisdictions reduced their line staff by 25 to 30 percent. Deregulation could affect restoration of electric service after the harsh storms that are so common in Wyoming.

We now have 20 plus years of data about what happens when we deregulate electricity markets. It’s safe to say that if legislators follow the “choice” path again, customers will pay a heavy price. As they say, “Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.”

*Paul Griffin is the executive director for Energy Fairness, a not-for-profit organization that advocates for sensible energy policy.*



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65-69	\$20.50	\$16.00	\$33.50	\$26.00	\$66.00	\$51.00	\$163.50	\$126.00
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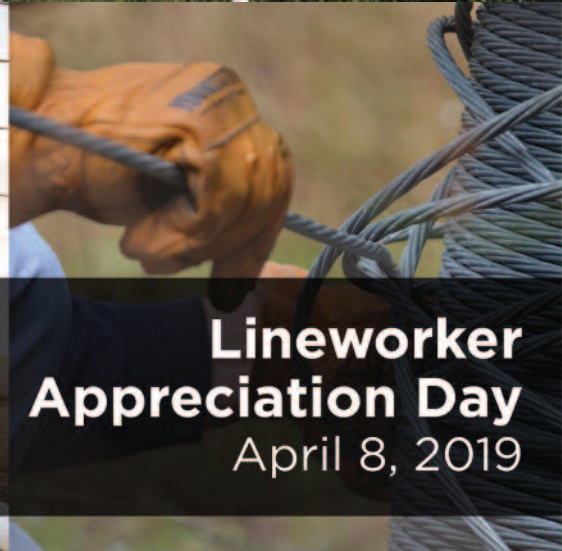
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#ThankALineworker



# Lineworker Appreciation Day April 8, 2019



*Top left: Norris PPD journeyman linemen install wire on a new line.*

*Top center: Highline Electric Association crews work on storm recovery in the April 13, 2018 blizzard.*

*Top right: Cuming County PPD linemen change a breaker.*

*Bottom left: Twin Valleys PPD crews repair lines after a winter storm.*

*Bottom right: Chimney Rock PPD linemen set a pole in an existing power line.*

*Opposite: Cornhusker PPD Line Technician Bryce Theilen shows students from Leigh Community Schools the rubber sleeves and gloves he wears when working around electricity.*





# Lineworker Appreciation Day worth celebrating

**M**ark your calendar on April 8, 2019 to join us in celebrating a group of our state's hardest working men and women -- the electric lineworker. You probably don't even notice these well-trained and highly skilled employees working hard to keep the electricity flowing in the areas they serve. It's not until a storm strikes that most of us think about these guys.

When the power goes out, for whatever reason, Nebraska's electric linemen are the first to jump into action. Crews from neighboring systems will join in the effort to help restore power as quickly as possible. This type of mutual aid was evident last month when crews responded to damage caused by winter storms and flooding across the state.

Linemen must perform their duties safely and efficiently while wearing special gear to protect themselves. This gear often makes their tasks more difficult.

America's public power districts and electric cooperatives have designated the second Monday of April as National Lineman Appreciation Day.

On April 8, 2019, the Nebraska Rural Electric Association and its 34 member-systems will honor the hard working men and women who often work in challenging conditions to keep the lights on.

We proudly recognize all electric linemen for the services they perform around the clock in dangerous conditions to keep power flowing and protect the public's safety.

Electric linemen do not often receive the recognition they deserve. They work all hours of the day, often in hazardous conditions far from their families, going above and beyond to restore power to their communities. Our linemen, as well as linemen from across the nation, truly deserve this special day of recognition.

To honor their linemen, a number of public power districts and electric cooperatives across Nebraska have plans to celebrate National Lineman

Appreciation Day.

The office staff at Cedar-Knox Public Power District in Hartington, Neb. plans to make breakfast for the crews before they start their day.

KBR Rural Public Power District in Ainsworth, Neb. places an ad in their

local newspaper to honor the linemen. Many of the systems will also have a resolution passed by their board of directors to celebrate the day.

From restoring power after a storm to building new lines to serve customers, Nebraska's electric linemen are the face of public power in Nebraska. They play a vital role in serving customers around-the-clock with reliable and affordable electricity.

They don't always get the recognition they deserve. Please take a moment on April 8 and join us in expressing your appreciation for their professional contributions in all kinds of weather conditions, day and night. Use #ThankaLineworker to show your support for the men and women who light our lives.



## Know what's underneath that flower bed before you dig

Spring showers bring May flowers but digging on your own this spring could spell big trouble. Even if you think you could get lucky or that digging one small hole (or two) won't matter, don't take for granted what lines might lurk beneath the soil in your yard or easement.

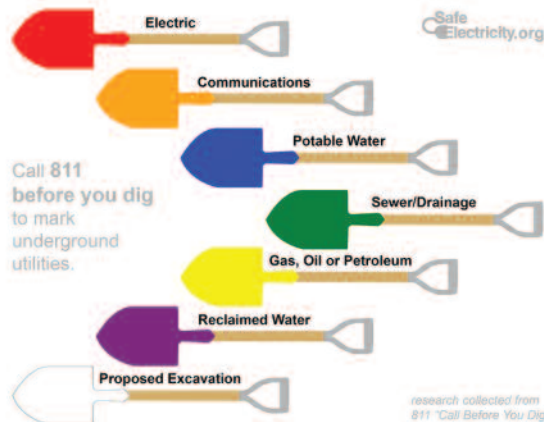
Before you use that post hole digger or other unearthing tools, STOP and call 8-1-1 to request that buried electric, gas, cable and other live lines in or near your yard be marked. The service is free but digging in an unmarked yard may not be.

You might think you don't have time for that and ask yourself, what's the worst that could happen?

**YOU COULD DIE OR BECOME SERIOUSLY INJURED.**

It doesn't make that yard project quite as pressing, does it?

Other consequences of blindly digging and taking a chance? You could cause a power outage. You could hit a gas line and get burned or cause an evacuation in your neighborhood. You could be fined. If you hit a telephone line or fiber optic line, you might lose your telephone, cable TV or internet service. Worse yet, it could interfere with your neighborhood's emergency assistance technology.



Although it all seems like "your" yard, utilities have the right of way to the live lines lurking under the ground in places where you might dig. In fact, an underground utility line is damaged once every six minutes across the nation because someone decided to dig without getting their yard properly marked, according to data collected by Common Ground Alliance. You may think one or two "small holes" won't matter, but that's what the person thought who hit a line six

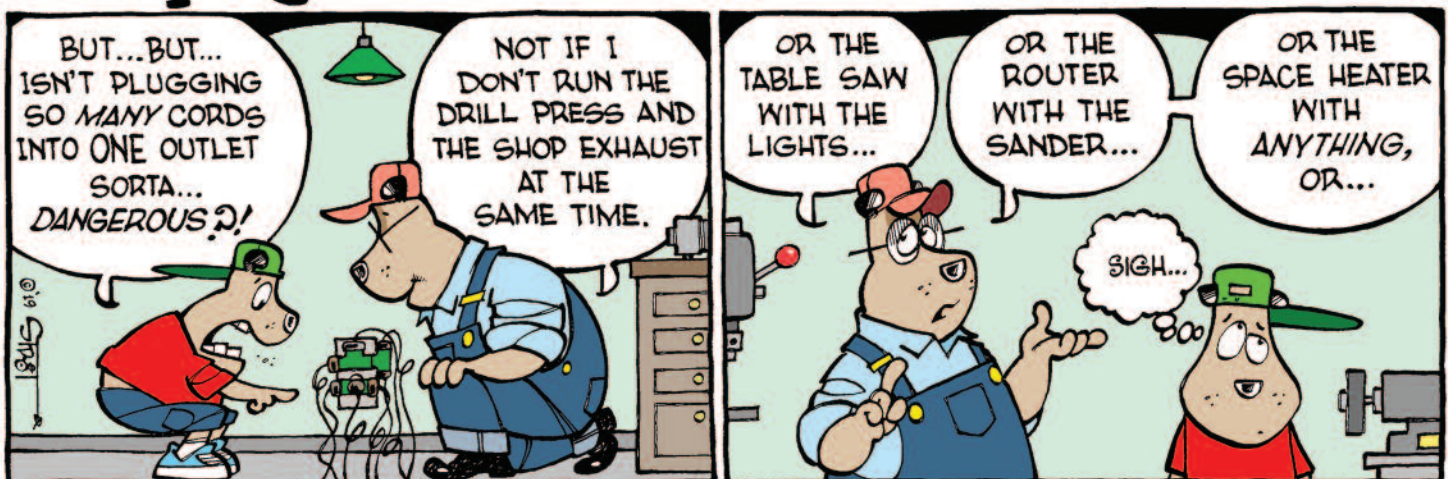
minutes ago.

Take a deep breath, look over your landscaping or fence plans, and call 8-1-1 before you dig. Each state has its own call center to help you get digging safely. By calling 8-1-1 or your state's digging call center directly, utilities or the companies they contract with will come to your home and mark your yard before you dig.

Safe Electricity reminds you that Call811.com lists the name and contact information for each state's digging notification service. The site also lists the advance notice required for marking services, which is usually two days, not including the day you call.

So tiptoe through the tulips this spring and summer, both literally and figuratively. Know what's underneath that flower bed and everywhere else in your yard.

## Murphy





# Tri-State and juwi announce 100-megawatt Spanish Peaks Solar Project

**T**ri-State Generation and Transmission Association, the nation's leading generation and transmission cooperative for solar energy, will more than double its emissions-free renewable energy from the sun through a new project announced today with Boulder, Colorado-based juwi Inc.

The 100-megawatt Spanish Peaks Solar Project is Tri-State's second utility-scale solar energy project with juwi, the U.S. subsidiary of Germany-based renewable energy company juwi AG. The project is adjacent to the 30-megawatt San Isabel Solar Project in Las Animas County, Colorado, which was developed by juwi and began producing power for Tri-State in 2016.

Tri-State, a wholesale cooperative power supplier owned by 43 member electric cooperatives and public power districts, will purchase the entire output of the project over the 15-year term of Tri-State's power purchase contract. The 660-acre project includes more than 300,000 photovoltaic solar panels on single axis tracking arrays to follow the sun throughout the day and serves the energy needs of 28,000 rural homes.

This is Tri-State's fourth utility-scale solar project and the first renewable energy purchase agreement announced by Tri-State following the issuance of its request for proposals for renewable energy supply in June 2018.

"Tri-State secures renewable energy with the highest value at the lowest cost for our member cooperatives, and this is our largest, most cost-effective solar project to date," said Mike McInnes, Tri-State's chief executive officer. "By developing renewable projects through Tri-State, our members take advantage of an economy of scale unavailable in smaller projects."

"We're pleased to once again collaborate with juwi on a project that benefits all of our members and further diversifies our power supply,"

said McInnes.

"juwi is proud to support the economically-savvy and environmentally-sound vision of Tri-State and will continue working with Tri-State and the people of Las Animas County to ensure the Spanish Peaks Solar Project delivers reliable solar energy for many years to come," said Michael Martin, juwi's chief executive officer. "As a Colorado company, our team is particularly excited to develop, build and operate a power plant of this magnitude within our home state."

The Spanish Peaks Solar Project is located approximately 20 miles north of Trinidad, Colorado, within the service territory of San Isabel Electric Association (SIEA), a Tri-State member system serving all or parts of seven counties in southern Colorado.

Like Tri-State, SIEA is a not-for-profit, member-owned electric cooperative.

In addition to the Spanish Peaks and San Isabel solar projects, Tri-State also purchases the full output of the 30-megawatt Cimarron and 25-megawatt Alta Luna solar projects in New Mexico. According to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Tri-State is currently the largest solar generation and transmission cooperative in the nation. Nearly a third of the energy consumed by Tri-State's members comes from emissions-free renewable energy.

Construction of the Spanish Peaks Solar Project is expected to begin in 2022, supporting 150 jobs during the peak construction period. The project is anticipated to be completed in 2023.

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## Breaking down seven energy-saving claims

by Pat Keegan

**Q** : When it comes to saving energy, it can be confusing to figure out what works and what doesn't. I know you usually just answer one question, but can you let me know what you think about a few things I've heard over the years?

**A** : Sure. Fire away!

**Q** : *Is it true that turning lights off and on uses more energy than just leaving them on?*

**A** : Not true. Turning off lights definitely reduces energy use. Turn off LED and incandescent bulbs every time you leave the room. The situation is a little different with compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs). Turning them off does save energy but can shorten the life of the bulb. The rule of thumb for CFLs is to turn them off any time they won't be used for 15 minutes or more.



*Replacing your old windows with newer, efficient ones won't cut your energy costs in half, but it could reduce your costs by about 10 percent. Photograph by Michael Mroczek*

**Q** : *Would replacing my old windows with new, more efficient ones really cut my energy use in half?*

**A** : No. While replacing inefficient windows with new, energy efficient windows can cut the heat loss through windows in half (or more), windows typically account for only about 25 to 30 percent of your space heating costs. The amount of energy you use for heating and cooling is likely one third to one half of your total energy use, so replacing your old windows might only reduce your total energy costs by about 10 percent. When you consider the high cost of new windows, you may not recoup your investment for 15 or 20 years, or even longer.

**Q** : *Does burning wood in my fireplace save on my heating costs?*

**A** : Possibly, but certain conditions need to be met. The wood should be dry and burned efficiently in a properly-installed, properly-placed, high-efficiency wood stove or fireplace insert. Otherwise, it's likely you'll lose as much heat through your chimney as you're distributing throughout the house.

**Q** : *My kids claim using the dishwasher is just as efficient as washing dishes by hand. Are they right?*

**A** : Yes – in fact, it's usually more efficient! Properly used dishwashers actually use less water while doing a better job, and as a bonus, they will save you more 200 hours a year. For maximum energy savings, make sure your water heater is set to about 120 degrees and use the most efficient wash/dry settings.

**Q** : *I've heard it's better to heat*



*Washing dishes by hand typically uses more energy than the dishwasher. Photograph by Catt Liu*

*individual rooms with an electric space heater and keep the doors closed to trap the heat. Is this true?*

**A** : It's possible to save money with an electric space heater if you use it only a few hours a day and reduce your home's thermostat setting by a couple degrees. Space heaters can cause fires, so they need to be used wisely and should never be left unattended. Which brings us to your next question...

**Q** : *Should I close the vents in rooms that aren't being used?*

**A** : Most experts advise against this because closing supply registers forces your furnace or A/C unit to work harder. They advise keeping all your vents and doors open. If your system supplies too much heat to some rooms and too little to other rooms, you should talk to a heating and air conditioning professional about modifying your ductwork.

**Q** : *Does the age of my home determine how energy efficient it is?*

**A** : Newer homes tend to be more efficient because energy codes have improved, but every home can have hidden energy issues, no matter its age. If you want to evaluate the efficiency of your home, it's best to schedule an energy audit with a professional.



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– Janet F.

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# Flavorful recipes to reimagine mealtime

While it can be easy to fall into a routine of cooking the same recipes week in and week out, getting creative with mealtime can be as easy as making simple swaps and trying new flavor combinations with fresh, high-quality ingredients.

One of the easiest ways to shake things up in the kitchen any night of the week is to reimagine a classic dish by replacing one of the main ingredients. As an alternative to the typical chicken or beef, fresh pork is a versatile, convenient and flavorful protein that can easily transform a predictable meal into something new and delicious.

Instead of chicken Florentine, try this recipe for Pork Chops in Creamy Roasted Garlic Florentine Sauce, or rethink the typical weeknight stir-fry with this quick and easy Italian Stir-Fried Pork and Pasta.

For more creative yet easy ways to reimagine mealtime, visit [Smithfield.com/ShakeItUp](http://Smithfield.com/ShakeItUp).



## Pork Chops in Creamy Roasted Garlic Florentine Sauce

- 4 Smithfield Boneless Pork Chops
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 8 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup bacon pieces, half-cooked
- 1/2 cup chicken stock
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 1/2 cups chopped fresh baby spinach
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh tomato
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning

Season pork chops on both sides with salt and pepper, to taste.

In large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Cook pork

chops 4-5 minutes per side until internal temperature reaches 145 F. Remove pork chops from pan and keep warm.

In same skillet, heat remaining oil over medium heat. Add minced garlic and partially cooked bacon to skillet; cook until tender, about 3 minutes. Add chicken stock and bring to simmer.

Reduce heat to low and add heavy cream. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

Add spinach and tomatoes to sauce; let spinach wilt. Stir in Parmesan cheese and Italian seasoning; simmer about 3 minutes.

Return pork chops to pan along with juices. Spoon Florentine sauce over chops; simmer 3-5 minutes.





### Italian Stir-Fried Pork and Pasta

- 1 Smithfield Roasted Garlic & Herb Marinated Fresh Pork Loin Filet
- 1 package (8 ounces) spiral pasta
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 small zucchini squash, sliced lengthwise and cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 8 sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup julienne-sliced sun-dried tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

Heat skillet or wok to 400 F. Slice pork loin filet into thin strips. Cook pasta according to package directions.

Add pork strips and oil to heated skillet. Stir-fry until meat is browned, about 5 minutes.

Add zucchini, onion, mushrooms, tomatoes, garlic and butter to skillet; stir-fry until vegetables are crisp-tender, about 5 minutes.

Drain pasta and add to pork and vegetable mixture with cheese and basil; toss to coat.

### Crab Quiche Bake

- 8 eggs, beaten
- 2 cups half & half cream
- 1 large sweet red pepper, chopped
- 1 package (12 oz.) imitation crab meat, chopped
- 1 cup soft bread crumbs
- 1 cup (4 oz.) shredded Swiss cheese
- 1 cup (4 oz.) shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup chopped green onions
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper

In a bowl, combine all ingredients. Transfer to a greased 13" X 9" X 2" baking dish. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes or until knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Let stand 10 minutes before cutting. Serves 6 to 8.

**Mildred Marcum, Spencer, Nebraska**

### Sandhill Special Soup

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 6 cups water                | 1/4 cup minced onion                       |
| 1/4 cup lentils             | 1/2 cup brown rice                         |
| 1/2 cup pearl barley        | 2 stalks celery, chopped                   |
| 2 carrots, sliced           | 1 28 oz. can tomatoes                      |
| 1 1/2 cups shredded cabbage | 1 1/2 lbs. hamburger or stew meat, browned |
| 1 46 oz. can V8 juice       |  |
| 1/4 cup green split peas    |  |

Simmer in water – peas, lentils, onion, barley, brown rice and salt to taste for 1 hour. Then add carrots, celery, cabbage, tomatoes, V8 juice and meat. Simmer until vegetables are tender, about 30 minutes.

**Cathy Foster, Greeley, Nebraska**

### Peeps Skillet S'Mores

- 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream, warmed
- 2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 5 packages of Peeps, mix and match colors to your liking
- Graham crackers, for serving

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Heat heavy whipping cream in a microwave safe bowl for 30 seconds, or in a pot over medium heat until warm. In a medium cast-iron skillet, evenly spread out chocolate chips. Pour warmed whipping cream over the chips. Arrange Peeps in a colorful pattern atop. Bake until golden brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Serve on graham crackers.

**Tina Schweitzer, Lincoln, Nebraska**

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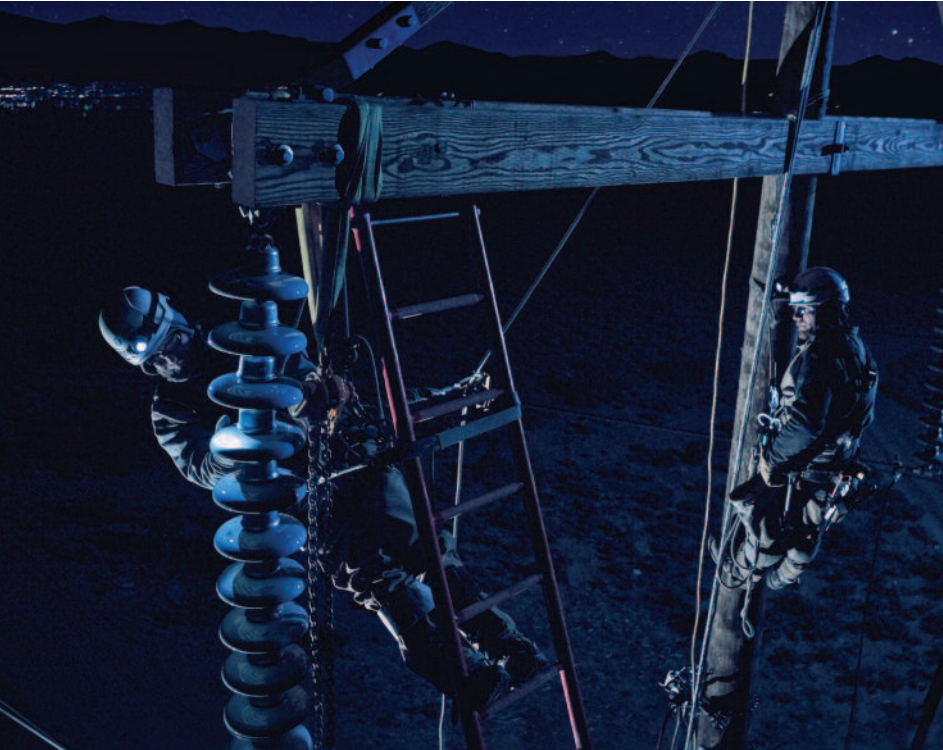
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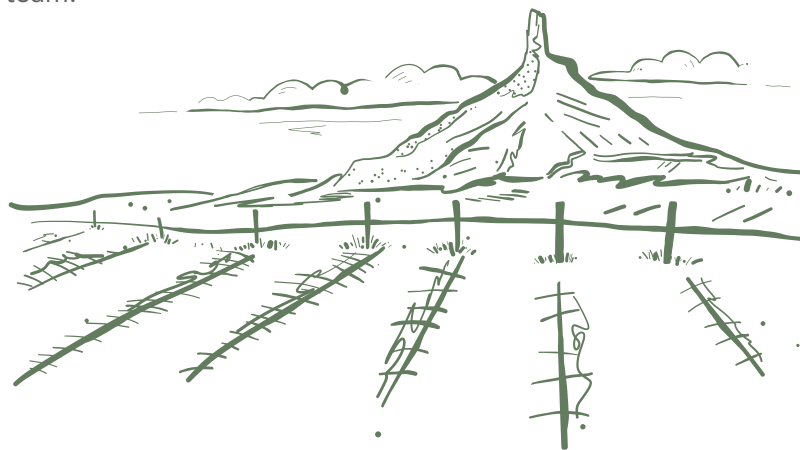
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