

# NEBRASKA

Magazine

October 2021

NREA.org

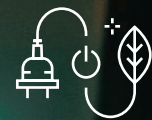
## The Glow of Friday Night Lights

### Inside:

• Pumpkin patch offers more than pumpkins • The Pros and Cons of App Enabled Lighting • October is Public Power Month

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NREA 



# Unplug and save up to \$50 yearly on your energy bill.

Your home electronics – TVs, computers and video games consoles – are constantly consuming small amounts of power in standby mode, meaning, a device that is plugged in, switched off or in sleep mode. Unplugging your electronics when not in use can add up to \$50 in yearly savings.

Contact your local co-op or public power district for more energy saving tips or visit [tristate.coop](http://tristate.coop).



**TRI-STATE**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Telling the story of  
Rural Nebraska

Volume 75  
Number 10  
October 2021



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# Contents



## 6 The Glow of Friday Night Lights

In many smaller, rural towns high school football is what brings the community together, adorned in their school colors, screaming and cheering until their throats are sore.



## 10 Pumpkin patch offers more than pumpkins

Not only does Poppy's Pumpkin Patch feature pumpkins—stacks of them—but it also offers a place for children to play: a grain bin filled with corn, a gigantic spider web to crawl on, giant slippery slides, and a train to take a ride on.

## Departments

Editor's Page

Safety Briefs/Murphy

Energy Sense

Down Home Recipes

Marketplace

Cover photograph by Wayne Price



Wayne Price

## October is Public Power Month

Take part in celebrating with your local electric utility

We take electricity for granted in Nebraska and the entire United States for that matter. The people who can remember what it was like before their family had electricity are becoming fewer every year. It is easy to forget how dependent we have become on electricity in our everyday lives. We flip the switch and automatically expect our homes and offices to be filled with light. In the span of about 100 years we have seen electricity evolve from a big city luxury to a nationwide necessity. It keeps us safe and comfortable, and it connects us to our friends and family.

It doesn't hurt to be reminded occasionally about the importance of electricity, as well as the central role public power has in helping local businesses thrive, and the contributions it makes to our towns, our state and the nation.

Public Power Month honors the nation's more than 2,000 not-for-profit, community-owned electric utilities, like those that serve your homes, ranches and businesses.

Public Power serves the interests of the community. The not-for-profit rates hold down household and business costs, and Nebraska has some of the lowest electric rates in the country. Lower electricity rates attract and keep businesses that provide jobs for our citizens. They are also good for our household budgets.

When it comes to service, you know your electric provider is just down the street or a phone call away if you have problems. And you know their track record of keeping the power on and restoring it immediately in the case of weather-related outages, such as blizzards and tornadoes.



# Have You Considered Running for Public Office?

Learn what it takes to wage  
an effective and winning  
campaign

## Topics include:

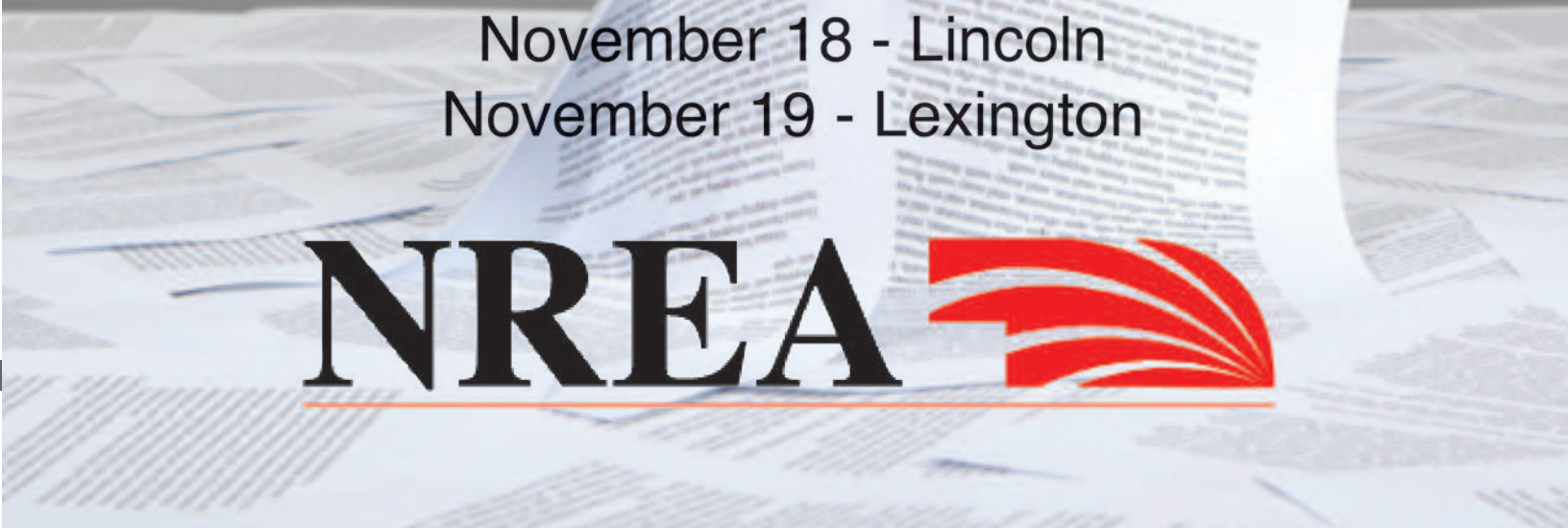
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**NREA** 



# *The Glow of Friday Night Lights*



In small towns across Nebraska, there's basically one event happening on Friday night: the football game. And everyone is going to be there.

In many smaller, rural towns high school football is what brings the community together, adorned in their school colors, screaming and cheering until their throats are sore. Many of the spectators spent their high school days playing and cheering on the same field. They remember when the school won the state championship in 1998 or when the quarterback threw a pass for an interception in the final seconds of the first game last season.

Players are taught valuable life lessons that will pay dividends long after their playing days are over. And we'll be there to cheer them on.





*Photos taken at a football game between Sandy Creek and Hershey. The Sandy Creek High School, located near Fairfield, Neb., receives electricity from South Central Public Power District.*



*Above: Drake Lally, a Sandy Creek junior, attempts to bring down Hershey's Kaden Thompson.*

*Left: Hershey quarterback Cooper Hill takes a hit from #49 Jacob Petr on an option play.*

*Below: Teams shake hands at the conclusion of the game.*



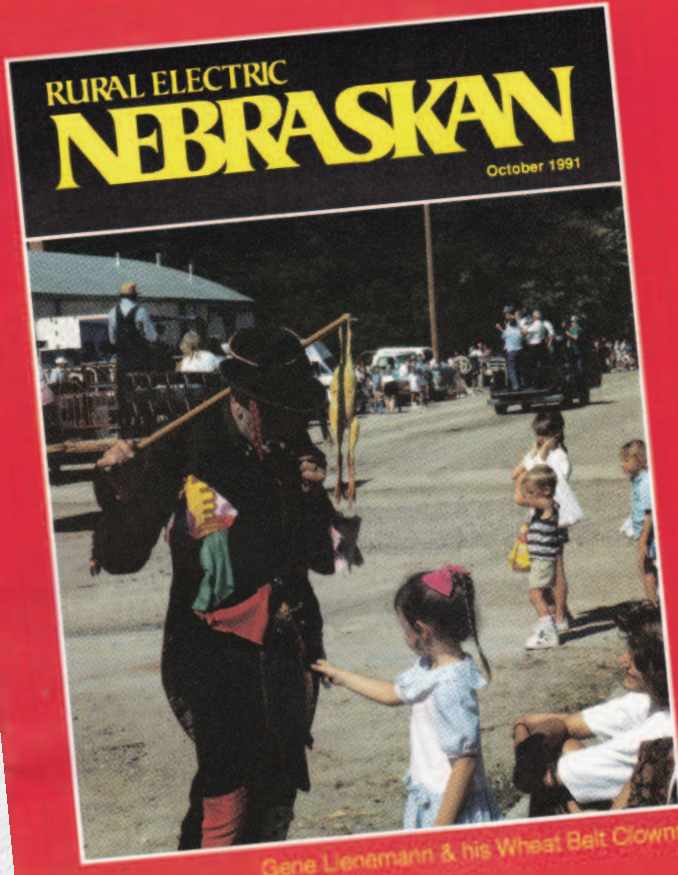


# 30 YEARS AGO

The Nebraska Rural Electric Association has published a statewide magazine for the past 75 years, keeping readers informed about their public power utilities, promoting the time-saving benefits of electric power and telling the story of rural Nebraska.

The October 1991 issue included a cover photo and feature article on Gene Lienemann and the Wheat Belt Clowns. Another article told the story of the relationship between electric and magnetic fields.

Editor Jack Merritt confessed to being a codger, which to him meant being an "old and somewhat eccentric man." He noted that new technology, like cellular phones, made him mad.



Gene Lienemann & his Wheat Belt Clowns



**Response #OCT-1:** Soft spoken, fun loving 30-year-old guy, who enjoys sports and country living, is looking for a lady in her 20s or early 30s with similar interests.

**Response #OCT-2:** Female, early 30s, who enjoys snuggling up to a cozy fireplace on those cold Nebraska nights, seeks male in early 30s to late 40s, and who is drug and alcohol free.

**Response #OCT-3:** Central Nebraska Christian, who likes outdoor activities, good music and clean fun, seeks a female, 26-36, to share friendship, love and life.

**Response #OCT-4:** South central Nebraska guy, blond and blue eyed, non-smoker, who enjoys farming and country living, would like to meet a mature lady in her 20s who shares same interests. Photo and phone # appreciated.

the same age who is lonely too, and who enjoys going places. No smoking or drinking.

**Response #OCT-6:** East central Nebraska gentleman, 50, non-smoker who seldom drinks, loves C/W music and kids, and also enjoys camping, dining out, quiet times at home and slender ladies.

**Response #OCT-7:** Central Nebraska single girl, mid 20s, who enjoys C/W music, country life, horseback riding and volleyball, seeks a companion, 25-35, with similar interests.

**Response #OCT-8:** Attractive slender brunette female who loves hunting, fishing, boating, golfing, cooking and traveling. Companion # appreciated.



## The confessions of a codger

I admit it. I'm a codger. I also admit that I don't relate to the woman Baby Boomer from New Jersey who responded to her optometrist's diagnosis that she needed bifocals by paying big bucks for lineless bifocals (see in \$300 Ralph Lauren frames and who was quoted in a recent Associated Press story as saying: "I refuse to get old. I just will not get old. Age is just a mindset.")

For me, at least, growing older is both bodysat and mindset. In fact, like the sun, my body seems to be setting all over the place—especially over my belt and under my eyes. Or put another way, I've fought 50 rounds with gravity and gravity has been coming on strong in the later rounds.

So unlike the spunky lady from the "right coast," who will likely add implants and numerous tucks to her lineless bifocals in her battle against time, I hope to grow old gracefully—or, at least, gracefully accept the physical changes of my body.

And, yes, I know that growing old is easier for men than women because that good woman of mine has pointed that fact out to me on many occasions. I am also aware that as a society do grant psychological harm to women with our emphasis on physical beauty and the appearance of eternal youth.

Nevertheless, unlike the lady from New Jersey, I'm more concerned with my mind becoming old than my body. That's why I began this commentary with the confession that I'm a codger. According to my dictionary a codger is an "old and somewhat eccentric man."

Apparently women do not become codgers because they recognize that age is "... just a mindset," and they "... just will not get old."

With that aside, let me continue my confession. I think I'm a codger because most new fangled things



Jack Merritt

make me mad. Like cellular phones, for instance. Every time I see someone wandering around the streets talking into one of those contraptions, I think to myself, "That guy's a jerk and he's just showing off. He can't possibly be so important his phone call won't wait until after lunch."

Or when I cross the street and someone in a car is yapping on one of those things, I think: "That guy's going to run over someone one of these days, especially if his girl friend tells him that she's going to tell his wife about their relationship; or if his bookie tells him that if he doesn't pay up he'll be wearing thumb casts all winter."

Maybe I should out those poor souls who exist on the "left coast" a little slack on this cellular phone thing. I recently found out that when the LA freeway system was completed it moved traffic at an average of 60 mph. This year that average is 17 mph, and by 1995, it is expected to drop to 12 mph.

So if you're going to spend most of your life in a car, you would certainly want more conversational options than talking to truckers on a CB radio.

And did you know that if for some strange reason you choose to reside

in New York or Los Angeles, the phone companies are running out of numbers.

This paucity of phone numbers, especially in the area codes of LA and Manhattan, are primarily due to the plethora of cellular phones and unlisted numbers. But then, again, if you are forced to exist in one of these cultural centers you certainly don't want someone phone callers to pass the time by giving you a call while gridlocked on the freeway, which, of course, should be renamed "parkedway."

Several years ago, before I became a codger, I was eating at an elegant restaurant in San Francisco. While eating, the maitre d' brought a phone to a dinner party seated at an adjoining table, plugged the phone into a floor jack, and with a bow, handed the phone to one of the gentlemen in that party.

Contrast the above with this: While eating in a semi-fast food restaurant, I noticed a young man and woman seated several booths down, both speaking on cellular phones. Both incidents involved phones, but one had class while the other was crass. I can only hope the two cellular "phonies" were not speaking with each other.

I asked that good woman of mine the other night if she thought I was a codger. "I think you are a distinguished, middle aged gentleman," she said. A little later I asked, "Honey, do you think cellalite comes from talking too much on a cellular phone?"

"Jack, that's the most eccentric notion I've ever heard," she replied.

Jack Merritt

## Coal will continue to produce power

Last year's amendments to the Clean Air Act will make natural gas an increasingly popular plant fuel in the years to come. Coal will continue to generate more than half the nation's electricity, the government predicts.

The Annual Outlook for U.S. Electric Power, released by the Energy Department, said utilities will rely on scrubbers, fuel switching and emission allowance to meet the requirements of the new law. It forecast a price increase of only one-tenth of a cent per kilowatt-hour by 2010, although the increase could be more than that in areas that burn high-sulfur coal.

Power producers' utilities—are expected to be coal-fired generating the next two decades. *Electric News Service*

October 1991

## FEATURES

**Worms For Sale by M. K. Theodoratus**  
If you're looking for a potentially profitable sideline, you might consider these helpful tips on raising worms by Colorado freelance writer M. K. Theodoratus. **6**

**What We Know About EMF by Nicole Gudzwosky**  
Rural Electric News Service's Nicole Gudzwosky summarizes existing scientific information about the relationship between electric and magnetic fields and health risks. **10**

**Giant Horses by Raymond Schuessler**  
Florida writer Raymond Schuessler describes some of history's truly big horses. **12**

**Gene Lienemann and the Wheat Belt Clowns by Jack Merritt**  
The Wheat Belt Clown Corps has become an institution throughout Nebraska. This feature profiles the Clown Corps and its founder, Gene Lienemann. **12**

## Save \$\$\$ with hot water conservation

By using hot water wisely, you can save energy and, in turn, save on energy costs.

The best place to cut back on hot water usage is in the bathroom. A family of four uses about 250 gallons of water a day just in the bathroom alone. And most of the water used in the bathroom is either warm or hot.

The following tips, provided by the Rural Electric Co. in Pine Bluffs,

Wyoming, can help you cut down on the hot water you use.

--Install water flow restrictors in your showerheads to reduce the flow of water from five to eight gallons of water per minute to three gallons or less per minute.

--Wash clothes in warm or cold water and always use cold water to rinse. Adjust the water level to the amount of clothes you're washing.



*Mashaela Wolken, pictured above, and her mother, Tracy Stoural, added splashes of fall color throughout the Pumpkin Patch, many of them along with antiques. Visitors love the atmosphere.*

*One of the kids' favorite stops is at the corn bin.*

*Opposite: Slides comes in all shapes.*

*Photographs by LaRayne Topp*

by LaRayne Topp

# Pumpkin Patch offers more than pumpkins

Ryan and Mashaela Wolken were looking for a small business to run when they happened upon a pumpkin patch. They happen to love pumpkin patches, having taken their children to a number of them over the years. They knew what they were looking for and Poppy's Pumpkin Patch near Norfolk, Nebraska, fit as perfectly as Cinderella's glass slipper or at least her pumpkin carriage.

Not only does Poppy's Pumpkin Patch feature pumpkins—stacks of them—but it also offers a place for children to play: a grain bin filled with corn, for example, a gigantic spider web to crawl on, giant slippery slides, and a train to take a ride throughout the 19 acres that make up the Patch, along with an additional five acres just for parking.

That much room is necessary because in the fall when the Patch is the busiest, especially during the month of October, as many as 2,000 children and their parents will stop by on a weekend. These include school tours, assisted living groups, and even high schoolers. Mashaela Wolken gives educational sessions during the tours, on entrepreneurship for the teenagers, and lessons on how pumpkins grow for the smaller tykes.

Much of the children's outdoor play equipment was in place when the Wolkens bought the well-known attraction in 2017. The Pumpkin Patch was originally dreamed up by Connie and Gerald Hintz, opening in 1999.

Since the Patch's purchase, the Wolkens have added new activities yearly, built by Ryan Wolken when he's home from work, along with his father Gary Wolken.

"They can build everything," Mashaela Wolken said.

In the summer time, the entire Wolken family pitches in. The ages of 12, 10, 7 and four-year-old twins, the Wolken youngsters help out, working in the café,



painting the faces of youngsters, mowing the property, and of course, planting pumpkins. In the wintertime, Ryan and Mashaela gather input from their kids and design new things for visitors to enjoy.

"We love pumpkin patches," Mashaela Wolken said. "We went every year, so we know what kids like."

Such as the grain bin filled with shelled corn.

"Kids go in and have a blast," Wolken explained. Or like the recently-built, 130-foot, twin racer slide tower nestled into one of the hills. It's situated next to a gigantic spider web which Ryan fashioned from rope, and across the way from a giant jumping pillow, similar to a trampoline. At the human hamster track, adults and kids alike position themselves inside large "hamster wheels," rolling round and round down a 30-foot track.

Those aren't the only new things to see. The Pioneer Village is a center attraction, complete with a saloon for

**Continued on Page 12**

## From Page 11

thirsty travelers. A number of local vendors set up in the Village, offering handmade crafts for sale: home décor, t-shirts and metal art.

A new, larger-sized train takes off from the Pioneer Village, allowing adults and siblings to ride with smaller children on a winding course around the farm. One of the carts on the tractor-drawn train is handicapped accessible.

“All kids love the train,” Wolken said. “Kids want their parents or older siblings to ride so they can share the time together.”

A new corral’s also been built for the petting zoo. Because it’s a working farm, Wolken said, in the spring there’s newborn baby goats, ducks, chickens and even alpaca.

“Customers love that,” Wolken said.

Peacocks and peahens make their home high in the rafters of a grain bin, and fallow deer—a breed with origins in Europe—are kept in a deer farm. Donkeys and goats are often favorites in the petting zoo.

The café has also seen some updates, with a new kitchen and outdoor pickup area. The menu includes items like nachos, pretzels, a variety of soups and mac ‘n cheese. Wolken and her mother-in-law, Karan Wolken, offer baked goods, homemade pies, caramel apples, kettle corn and flavored popcorn.

“We like that homemade feel,” Mashaela Wolken said. “We make fun memories here. People think back about the fall when they were younger, remember Poppy’s and bring their own kids here.”

Because of the Pumpkin Patch’s large space, families are happy to have a place to feel safe, Wolken said, where they’re able to socially distance. The Wolkens added hand-sanitizing stations last year, and also a climate-controlled building for parents with a diaper changing station and breast feeding room, served with



*Above: Be careful you don't land in jail at Pioneer Village.*

*Below: Fallow deer, a breed with origins in Europe, are kept in a deer farm.*

electrical utilities by Elkhorn Rural Public Power District.

“The community likes it that we add something new every year, that we’re constantly improving,” Wolken said. Visitors come from numerous states. Typically, pumpkin patches have only hayrack rides and corn mazes, so they’re surprised there’s so much to do at the Wolkens’ pumpkin patch.

The Wolkens’ parents and siblings help during the busy season. “It’s a family affair,” Wolken said.

In the future, the Wolkens are thinking of constructing a sports barn, with room for kids to toss about basketballs and footballs, and a pedal go-cart track. They’ve also drawn out plans for an obstacle course.

And maybe, just maybe, because fall is the season for witches and goblins, the Wolkens may be drawing up plans to turn their enchanted forest trail into a haunted one.

Poppy’s Pumpkin Patch is open for business this year September 11 through October 31. It is closed on Mondays. The hours on Tuesday and Wednesday are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and on Thursdays through Sundays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. On the off season, the Wolkens’ party barn is available for birthday parties and other events. See more at the website [poppypumpkinpatch.com](http://poppypumpkinpatch.com).

## Running Office Electronics at Home Can Cause Electric Bill to Increase

More people are working from home than ever before. A large portion of electricity that was traditionally consumed in commercial offices and businesses has shifted to homes and alternative work locations. While some may not notice the increase on their monthly energy bill, others are surprised to find out how much those office electronics, combined with increased use of other household appliances, can add. Whether at home or in a conventional office, the same principles of energy efficiency apply.

### Computers

Computers are usually the most critical piece of office equipment. Consider switching out old desktop PCs to a laptop. According to the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE), laptops use about one-third the power (22 watts) of a typical desktop (68 watts) when in active mode. Annually, a laptop could save about \$19 compared to a desktop.

Manage the computer's efficiency settings by enabling the low-power "sleep mode" to automatically activate after a set time of inactivity. This also applies to any connected peripheral equipment. Power management software is also available to ensure systems are running as efficiently as possible.

### Monitors

While more efficient flat screen monitors have become the standard for the last 20 years, not all monitors have similar energy requirements. High-resolution, ultrawide and twisted-nematic screens tend to consume more energy than general-use LED monitors. Applying "sleep" and "hibernate" settings and turning off machines when not in use can translate to significant

energy savings. Unmanaged monitors left on at night and on the weekend can easily add an extra \$30 onto energy bills each year.

### Printers

The ACEEE also notes that most home printers have less than 75 hours of active use a year. Similar to computers, activate the printer's power-management settings. As much as \$50 in energy savings could be realized annually. Print only when necessary and use the double-sided option when possible. In addition to reducing waste and energy use, it may also extend the life of the printer.



*If you want to know how energy efficient your home really is, an "in-person" home energy audit conducted by a certified professional is ideal. But if you can't find the time to hire a professional and schedule the appointment, consider the convenient online energy audit.*

### Cell phones and rechargeable devices

These days, everything is wireless. From cell phones and headsets to notebooks and keyboards, chargers are plugged in and devices connected to ensure a full charge when they are needed. Many continue drawing power even after charging is complete. Plugging office electronics into a power strip allows users to switch all chargers and other plug-in devices "off" with one switch.

### Coffee Makers

Yes, the coffee maker is a piece of office equipment! The California Energy Commission found that an average multi-cup coffee maker uses about 60 watt-hours to maintain brewed coffee at serving temperature. When left "on" throughout the day, a single unit can add \$25 a year to energy costs. Instead, turn coffee makers "off" when brewing is complete, and use the microwave to reheat a cup when desired. This is also help preserve the flavor!

More and more people decorate their yards for Halloween with elaborate lighting displays with as much enthusiasm and as many materials as they do for the Christmas holidays. Strings of decorative lights, fog machines, strobe and black lights, animatronics, and electrically powered decorations all add to the ambience of Halloween, but improperly used, can create added dangers of fire, shock, and other potentially disastrous accidents.

Use caution and look for potential hazards while decorating and operating these displays.

Safe Electricity.org offers these tips:

- Carefully inspect each electrical decoration. Cracking, fraying, or bare wires may cause a serious shock or start a fire. Replace any damaged products.
- Before using any light strings, animated displays, or other electrical products outdoors, make sure the product is approved by a nationally recognized certification organization such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL) and marked for outdoor use.
- Follow the use and care instructions that are included with your electrical decorations.



*As you prepare to turn your home into "Castle Transylvania" it is important to keep the small visitors in mind.*

- Don't overload extension cords or allow them to run through water on the ground. Typically, one extension cord should only have three strands of lights connected to it at most, but you should also check that the extension cord is rated for its intended use.

- Plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into outlets protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). If your outdoor outlets don't have them, either contact a qualified electrician to install them or use portable GFCIs instead.

- When decorating outside, always be sure to look up and double check that you and any equipment, such as a ladder or a light strand, are a minimum

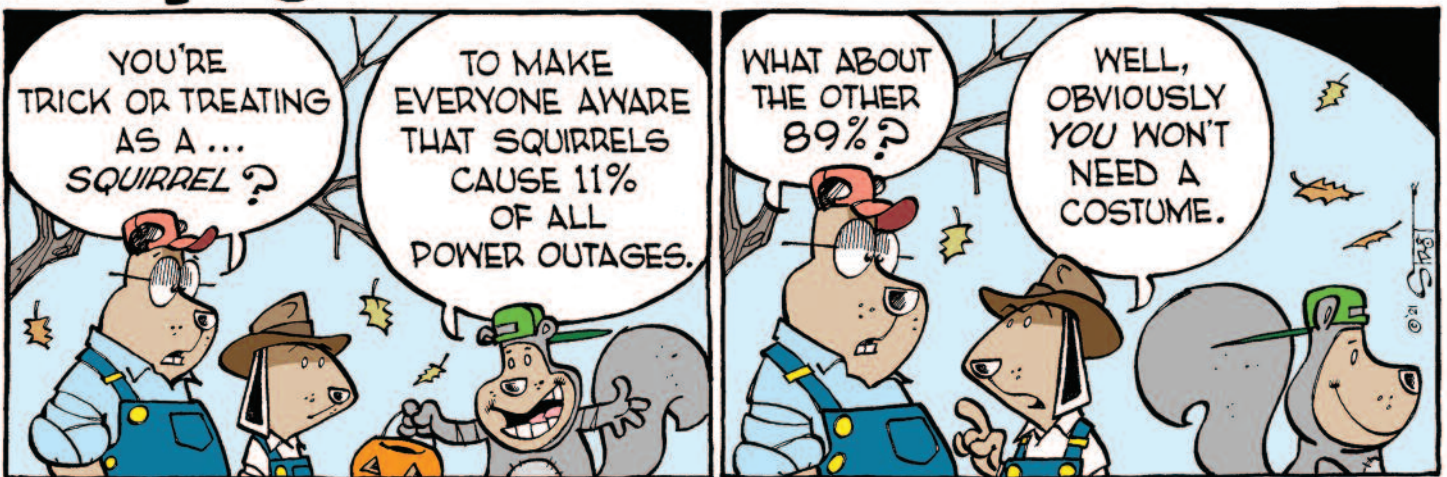
10 feet away from overhead power lines. When securing light strands, never staple or nail them into place. This could damage the product.

- Keep electrical cords out of walkway areas to avoid causing a tripping hazard.

- Lastly, turn off all electrical light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to sleep. A timer can help you do this.

Avoid real scares this Halloween, and decorate safely.

## Murphy



# The Invention of the Year

## The world's lightest and most portable mobility device

*Once in a lifetime, a product comes along that truly moves people. Introducing the future of battery-powered personal transportation . . . The Zinger.*

Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven't been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who's developed one of the world's most popular products created a completely new breakthrough . . . a personal electric vehicle. It's called the **Zinger**, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

***"What my wife especially loves is it gives her back feelings of safety and independence which has given a real boost to her confidence and happiness! Thank You!"***

***—Kent C., California***

The first thing you'll notice about the **Zinger** is its unique look. It doesn't look like a scooter. Its sleek, lightweight yet durable frame is made with aircraft grade aluminum. It weighs only 47.2 lbs but can handle a passenger that's up to 275 lbs! It features one-touch



Available in Green, Black (shown) and Blue



The Zinger folds to a mere 10 inches.

folding and unfolding – when folded it can be wheeled around like a suitcase and fits easily into a backseat or trunk. Then, there are the steering levers. They enable the **Zinger** to move forward, backward, turn on a dime and even pull right up to a table or desk. With its compact yet powerful motor it can go up to 6 miles an hour and its rechargeable battery can go up to 8 miles on a single charge. With its low center of gravity and inflatable tires it can handle rugged terrain and is virtually tip-proof. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life.

Why take our word for it. You can try the **Zinger** out for yourself with our exclusive home trial. Call now, and find out how you can try out a **Zinger** of your very own.

**Zinger Chair®**

**Call now and receive a utility basket absolutely FREE with your order.**

**1-888-831-7380**

**Please mention code 115655 when ordering.**



The Zinger Chair is a personal electric vehicle and is not a medical device nor a wheelchair. Zinger is not intended for medical purposes to provide mobility to persons restricted to a sitting position. It is not covered by Medicare nor Medicaid. © 2021 Journey Health and Lifestyle



# The Pros and Cons of App-Enabled Lighting Options

by Marie Kanevsky

Out of all the smart home technologies available on the market, the smart lighting is one of the easiest technologies to integrate into your home. Smart lighting can be controlled by voice command, through your smart phone or through a smart home hub (like Amazon Alexa), making them relatively easy to control. They are also among the most affordable smart home

devices, starting at about \$10 per bulb.

There's a range of benefits from using smart light bulbs. One of the most useful aspects of smart lighting is the ability to control the lighting while you're away from home. For example, if you leave for work and forget to turn off the lights at home, you can easily turn them off with a few taps on a smartphone app. Alternatively, if you're traveling but want to appear as if you're home, you can turn on your lights at a certain time to create that illusion.



Similarly, many smart lights offer the option for a customizable schedule. Consumers can schedule lighting to turn on or off at certain times of the day depending on their preferences. For instance, turning off all the lights at home just before bedtime, or scheduling the lights to turn on just before returning home from work.

To increase safety at home, many smart light bulbs have motion-detection technology that can sense if a person is in the room or nearby. This feature can be programmed to send an alert to your phone when the smart lighting detects an unexpected motion, either inside or outside the home.

Beyond the more practical applications, smart lighting can simply be fun to use. Bulbs are available in a variety of colors and dimming options that can help to set different themes or moods for the room, from an exciting bright white to a calming dim light. Various color temperatures can create different moods and also potentially help with winding down at night and improving sleep quality. Blue light, which mimics daylight, prevents the release of melatonin, an important hormone to feel sleepy. Setting smart lights to warmer-colored lights at night can help release melatonin, and therefore lead to a better night's sleep.

With all the benefits of smart lighting, there is also a higher price tag compared to regular light bulbs. Most smart lighting options on the market use LED light bulbs, which are more expensive but use less energy than traditional incandescent light bulbs and need to be replaced much less often. Incandescent light bulbs cost about \$1; however, their life spans are relatively short at around 1,000 hours. LED bulbs typically start at about \$2.50 per bulb, but their life spans are almost 25 times longer than incandescent bulbs. Switching from incandescent bulbs to LED smart bulbs can help save energy and money over the long run, despite the higher initial cost.

As a new technology, there are plenty of benefits but also a few potential issues to be aware of before implementing the technology. Some smart light bulbs may have minor technical issues, such as not properly

responding to a voice command. However, sticking with reputable brands should ensure a well-functioning light bulb. Another factor to consider is not all smart lighting options are compatible with dimmers since smart bulbs come with their own built-in dimming mechanisms.



*Above: Out of all the smart home technologies available on the market, smart lighting is one of the easiest and most affordable technologies to integrate into your home.*

*Photograph courtesy of Philips*

*Opposite: Smart light bulbs are available in a variety of colors and dimming options that can help to set different themes or moods for the room, from an exciting bright white to a calming dim light. Photograph courtesy of Cree*

This could lead to inconsistent lighting between smart and regular bulbs and could cause smart lights to flicker if they clash with the existing dimmer switch. To prevent this, simply avoid placing smart light bulbs in fixtures that already have a dimmer switch.

Before making any purchases, be sure to research which smart lighting options work best for your home. Read several reviews to ensure your purchase is reliable during the entirety of its lifespan. There are plenty of smart lighting options out there and choosing the best personalized option will help you make the most of it!

**Q** : I've heard heat pumps can be a good alternative for heating my home, but it looks like there are several types available. Can you explain a few of the most common options?

**A** : I think it's a good idea to consider a heat pump for your home. The technology has improved a lot over the past 10-20 years and is likely to be at least 20% more efficient than what you have now. Heat pumps can also cool your home during summer months, which is an added value!

Newer models of heat pumps can operate effectively in sub-zero weather, but sometimes they do so by switching to electric resistance mode, which is much less efficient. In a colder climate, it may be worth investing in a dual fuel system where propane or another fuel provides supplemental heat on extremely cold days. Here are a few situations where you might use the different types of air-source heat pumps.

## 1. Ducted heat pump

If your home has a forced air furnace, a centralized air-source heat pump can work well. A compressor outside your home that looks like an A/C unit is connected to your home's existing duct system. Like your furnace, the temperature is controlled through one main thermostat. This is a solid solution if your system has quality ductwork that heats and cools every room evenly, which is rare.

Ductwork in most homes is not designed to heat or cool every room evenly. Long supply runs provide little air to some rooms, and it's typical for some rooms to lack return air registers. Also, ductwork is often leaky, which creates comfort issues. If leaky ducts are located in unheated areas such as crawl spaces or attics, it will increase your heating and cooling costs. Poor ductwork will render any kind of central heating or cooling system much less effective. Some HVAC contractors can repair ductwork problems if the ductwork is accessible.

Heat pumps vary in efficiency, and this is measured in two ways. The Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) rating measures heating efficiency and the



*An air-source heat pump compressor located outside the home can distribute hot and cold air through your existing duct system. Photograph by Peter Stevens*

Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) rating measures cooling efficiency. The minimum ratings for a new heat pump are HSPF 8.2 and SEER 14. Heat pumps with the EnergyStar-rating are significantly more efficient than the minimum standard. The quality of the installation also matters, and some contractors will have more experience and training than others.

## 2. Mini-split heat pump

If your home does not have ductwork or the ductwork is poorly designed or leaky, a ductless mini-split heat pump might be your best bet. With a mini-split heat pump, tubes connected to the outside compressor carry refrigerant to one or more air handlers, which are mounted high on a wall to distribute air. Thermostats

regulate each air handler, providing control of different zones.

In climates that don't experience extreme cold, a ductless heat pump could supply all the heating and cooling in a small home. They are often used in combination with a central heating and cooling system. Ductless mini-splits are an excellent option if you don't have central air ducts, your ducts are leaking or you only want the new ductless heat pump to heat or cool part of the home.



*A homeowner shows off his energy efficient ductless heat pump. Photograph by Marcela Gara, Resource Media*

into or out of the ground by pipes buried in a loop 10 feet underground or drilled up to 400 feet into the earth. The pipes carry water to a compressor, which uses a refrigerant to transfer the heat to or from your home's ducts.

A geothermal heat pump system is extremely energy efficient since the earth's temperature is warmer than the outside air in the winter and cooler than the outside air in the summer.

But I should note this efficiency comes with a high price tag, which is the initial cost to install the pipe loop or drill the hole for a vertical pipe.

I hope this information provides a good starting point in your research of heat pumps. Check with your local public power district or electric cooperative for additional information and guidance.

### 3. Geothermal heat pump

Several feet underground, the temperature remains constant year-round, typically between 45 degrees and 75 degrees F, depending on latitude. Heat is transferred

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PS Form 3526-R, July 2014 (Page 2 of 4)

# Rally the Team with a Tasty Game Day Menu

Scoring big on game day requires championship-level meals and snacks that keep the crowd full and ready for action. You can take your tailgate to the house with these baked dishes that help simplify homegating so you can focus on the big screen.

Clock management is key to tackling a tailgate spread, making these delicious dishes the perfect play calls on game day.

## Just Wing It

Skip the silverware at your next tailgate and dive right in with a fan favorite that requires just your hands and a heap of napkins: wings.

Whether you pick through your pieces or clean each wing to the bone, these Game Day Chicken Wings are perfect for eaters of all types. A simple flour-based coating keeps the recipe easy to make and baking in the oven means you can skip the messy fryer or firing up the grill.

## Score Big with a Salsa-Based Dip

Whether your game day celebrations call for a full-blown parking lot party or homegating with your closest friends, the nibbles and noshes you serve set the stage.

To find more tailgate and homegate recipe inspiration, visit [Culinary.net](http://Culinary.net).



## Game Day Chicken Wings

- 1/2 cup butter, cubed**
- 1/3 cup flour**
- 2 teaspoons paprika**
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 1 teaspoon black pepper**
- 10 chicken wingettes, thawed**
- dipping sauces (optional)**
- fresh parsley (optional)**

Preheat oven to 425 F. Line baking sheet with foil. Arrange butter cubes on foil.

In medium bowl, combine flour, paprika, garlic powder, salt and pepper.

Coat both sides of wings in flour mixture then evenly space among butter cubes on baking sheet.

Bake wings 30 minutes.

Turn wings over and bake 15 minutes, or until crispy and fully cooked.

Serve with dipping sauces and sprinkle with fresh parsley, if desired.





### Mexican Pizza Dip

- Nonstick cooking spray**
- 1** tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1** pound ground beef
- 1** package taco seasoning mix
- 8** ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1/2** cup sour cream
- 1** cup Fresh Cravings Chunky Salsa, plus additional for topping
- 1** cup grated mozzarella
- 1/2** cup blended Mexican cheese sliced jalapeno (optional) sliced black olives (optional) green onions (optional) tortilla chips

Preheat oven to 350 F.  
Spray 8-by-8-inch glass pan or large soufflé dish with nonstick cooking spray; set aside.

In large sauté pan, heat oil over medium-high heat and add ground beef, breaking up with flat wooden spatula, until fully cooked. Sprinkle taco seasoning throughout beef and combine.

Place warm beef mixture in large bowl and add cream cheese, sour cream, 1 cup salsa and mozzarella. Mix well until combined and pour into prepared pan. Top with blended cheese and sliced jalapeno, black olives and green onions, if desired.

Bake until fully warmed and cheese is melted, 30-35 minutes.

Top with small spoonfuls of salsa. Serve with tortilla chips.

For more information and game day recipe ideas, visit [freshcravings.com](http://freshcravings.com).

### Avocado, Cilantro Dressing & Dip

- 2** ripe Avocados, peeled and seeded
- 3** tablespoons plain Greek yogurt
- 1** cup low-fat buttermilk
- 2** cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4** cup chopped cilantro
- 2** tablespoons chopped green onions
- 1** jalapeno, seeded and chopped
- Juice of 1** lime
- 1/4** teaspoon cumin
- salt and pepper**

Combine all ingredients in blender or food processor. Blend till smooth.

**Meribeth Kelsey, North Platte, Nebraska**

### Crockpot Meal

- 1** bag of frozen tortellini
- 2** cans of diced tomatoes or Italian style diced tomatoes
- 1** box or 4 cups chicken broth
- 4** chicken breasts (cooked and cut up) or beef meatballs (cooked)
- 1** block of cream cheese

Put all ingredients in crockpot (chunking up the cream cheese). Cook on low for 5 to 6 hours. Enjoy!

**Nancy Jochem, Edison, Nebraska**

### Apple Cake with Topping

- | Cake                           | Topping                    |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>1</b> cup sugar             | <b>1/2</b> cup brown sugar |
| <b>1/4</b> cup softened butter | <b>1/2</b> cup white sugar |
| <b>1</b> egg                   | <b>1/2</b> cup cream       |
| <b>2</b> cups diced apples     | <b>1/4</b> cup butter      |
| <b>1 1/4</b> cups flour        | <b>1</b> tablespoon flour  |
| <b>1/4</b> teaspoon cinnamon   | <b>1</b> teaspoon vanilla  |
| <b>1</b> teaspoon soda         |                            |
| <b>1/2</b> cup chopped walnuts |                            |

Cake – mix sugar and butter until blended, add egg, then flour, cinnamon and soda. Stir in apples and walnuts. Batter will be stiff, but apples will moisten batter. Bake in 9” X 11” greased pan for 35 minutes at 350 degrees. Topping – melt butter in saucepan, add brown sugar, white sugar, flour and cream. Bring to a boil, then add vanilla. Serve warm over cake.

**Mary Schumann, Butte, Nebraska**

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# Extension Cord Safety Tips

Roughly **3,300 home fires** originate in extension cords each year. Extension cords can overheat and cause fires when used improperly, so **keep these important tips in mind** to protect your home and loved ones.



Never plug an extension cord into **another extension cord**.



Make sure extension cords are **properly rated for their intended use**, indoor or outdoor. Never use an indoor extension cord outdoors.

## Extension Cord Designations

S: Designed for General Use

W: Rated for Outdoor Use


J: Standard 300 Voltage Insulation

T: Made from Vinyl Thermoplastic

P: Parallel Wire Construction  
(Air Conditioner Cords and Household Extension Cords)

O: Oil-Resistant

E: Made from TPE

Never use three-prong plugs with outlets that only have two slots. **Never** cut off the ground pin to force a fit, which could lead to electric shock.



Only use extension cords that have been approved by an independent testing laboratory, such as the ones listed above.

## Cord Length and Amperage Limits

**25 – 50** Feet Extension Cords

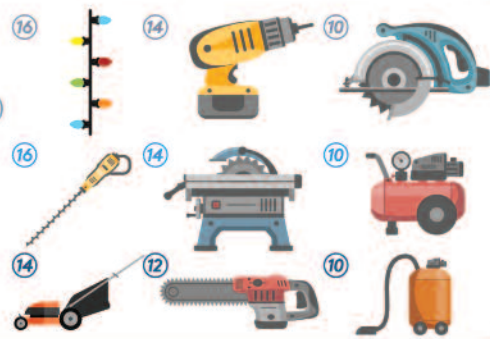

16 Gauge (1–13 Amps)  
14 Gauge (14–15 Amps)  
12–10 Gauge (16–20 Amps)

**100** Feet Extension Cords

16 Gauge (1–10 Amps)  
14 Gauge (11–13 Amps)  
12 Gauge (14–15 Amps)  
10 Gauge (16–20 Amps)

**150** Feet Extension Cords

14 Gauge (1–7 Amps)  
12 Gauge (8–10 Amps)  
10 Gauge (11–15 Amps)

Always use **GFCI protection** when using an extension cord outdoors.



Inspect cords for damage before use. Check for cracked or frayed sockets, loose or bare wires, and loose connections. Discard damaged extension cords.

⚠ Extension cords are for **temporary use only**. A heavy reliance on extension cords is an indication that you have **too few outlets** to address your needs. Have **additional outlets installed** where you need them.

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