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Magazine

January 2023

BACK IN SESSION

108th Nebraska Legislature
Underway in Lincoln

Inside:

• Should I Change My Charging Habits? • How Electric Vehicles Impact the Grid • Don't Let Your Generator Generate Trouble



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Telling the story of
Rural Nebraska

Volume 77
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11 Nebraska State Senator Directory

The first session of the 108th Nebraska Legislature will convene on Wednesday, January 4th in Lincoln. It's a 90-day session. Find your State Senator in this helpful directory.

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Cover photograph by Wayne Price



Wayne Price

Protecting the Reliability of the Grid

Reliable electricity is the result of a complex infrastructure of substations, transformers, and miles of transmission and distribution lines. This infrastructure must be constantly monitored, controlled, and maintained to ensure reliability. The reliability of the U.S. electric power system is critical to the nation's economic vitality and the well-being of society. Today, that reliability is being challenged, as the infrastructure ages and as incidences of severe weather and other threats to the system increase.

A gunfire attack on two electrical substations in rural North Carolina in December left tens of thousands of people without power, schools closed, a curfew imposed, and authorities investigating what they say was an intentional, criminal attack.

Questions persisted about who carried out the attack and what could have been their motive in knocking out power to Moore County and its 100,000 residents.

The outage began shortly after 7 p.m. Saturday, December 3, 2022, near Carthage, N.C., and soon spread to encompass the majority of the county. Officials have so far stopped short of calling the attack an act of domestic terrorism but have insisted that any perpetrators will be prosecuted.

"This is an unprecedented outage that's drawn national attention because of the crime that occurred," Dale Lambert, CEO of Randolph EMC. He added that the Moore County Sheriff's Department has increased patrols around the co-op's assets since the attack to help discourage further criminal activity.

Duke Energy said it will cost several million dollars to repair its equipment. Randolph Electric Membership Corp. officials said 2,768 of its members were impacted by the outage. The Asheboro-based co-op immediately responded by dispatching crews to assess the damage and craft a plan to restore service to members as quickly as possible.

While this attack was not in Nebraska, our local public power districts and electric cooperatives constantly work to prevent outages and protect the reliability of our system from natural and manmade threats. Maintaining and enhancing the security of the electric grid is a top priority for us and the entire electric industry.

Manager's Message



Rick Nelson

Rick Nelson is the General Manager of Nebraska Rural Electric Association. He is also the General Manager of Custer Public Power District, headquartered in Broken Bow, Nebraska

The Promise of Things to Come

I always find it refreshing to start a new year. This year, there is a promise of new things to come both within the Nebraska Rural Electric Association, *Nebraska Magazine*, and within the electric industry in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Rural Electric Association looks forward to making changes to the way we communicate with rural Nebraskans. We find it a privilege to be able to send this magazine to you and so many people in the state and beyond. We often think however that we could be doing so much more. We think there are ways to communicate with so many more people, just by including them in our social media presence and making the magazine and all of its content available using multiple channels.

Like many other organizations, we are fighting an uphill battle with paper shortages and price increases that continues to exert cost increases. I know I will never get tired of feeling the paper of the magazine in my hands while I read the stories, but some want to see it in different ways. I am excited about what could be happening in the future with how the *Nebraska Magazine* is presented to you the reader, but still, realize that most of us want to feel the paper.

Now, I will turn my attention to the public power electric industry. The electric industry in general across the United States has spent 100 years just churning away in the background. Mostly going unnoticed and building a system that is the largest mechanical system by far in the world. In Nebraska, public power has always been there to make sure that electricity is reliable and provided to you at the least cost model possible.

Every public power district and electric cooperative across the state has its own set of challenges. That is why local control is so important in rural Nebraska. Some power districts have a lot of irrigation, some have a lot of industry, and some just have a lot of miles to cover. All of those have different customers and different needs. But there is one thing we can all agree upon and that is our system of public power is the only way that the citizens of Nebraska have reliable and cost-effective electricity.

In today's very public world of electricity, many people think there is a better way to generate electricity and distribute it to you, the end consumer. Nebraska as a state has some of the lowest-cost, most reliable electricity in the United States, and yet that is not enough.

We, as public power, spend an enormous amount of time in our public power role analyzing technology, studying new processes, and working on solutions that make sense. There is not a public power district or electric cooperative in Nebraska that does not understand that every dollar we spend is a dollar our customers give to us.

Will the public power system look different in the next 100 years because of the shift in priorities related to the future generation and how to distribute that electricity? You bet it will. But it will be a shift that happens over time and a shift that makes sense for Nebraska. Each one of us is public power. Let's not forget that.

Should I Change My Charging Habits?

Four things to know about extending rechargeable battery life

Many of us are so connected to our phones, tablets and laptops that we panic when their battery nears the dreaded 0% mark.

We want our device batteries to perform well for as long as possible. But taking care of them can conflict with why we have our electronics in the first place. The point isn't to fret about battery life, it's to read and send e-mails, scroll on social media, take photos and countless other pursuits.

If you ever find yourself fretting over your device's power levels, here are a few tips on striking the right balance between battery health and how you work and play:

1. Keep your battery about 40% to 80% charged.

There's a lot of reasonable advice around the internet to keep your phone charged between 20% and 80%, or between 40% and 80%. To understand those recommendations—and why you might want to either follow them or ignore them—it helps to understand how rechargeable batteries work.

Up until about 20 years ago, batteries benefited from occasional “deep discharges”—running the battery down until the device shuts off. But because of different materials used in batteries today, that's not true anymore.

Rechargeable batteries work by containing two different materials that produce electricity when particles flow from one to the other. They flow the other direction when being recharged. That process will degrade any battery over time. Keeping both sides of the battery in balance, with the device charged at about 50%, will put the least amount of stress on the battery and make it last longer.

But that's unrealistic—no one's going to keep their phone half-charged all the time. So, the experts try to make it easier by recommending 40% to 80% or 20%

to 80%. Apple devices offer even more flexibility, pointing out that modern rechargeable batteries are designed to last for years under a variety of ways you use them. They recommend rather than worrying about the battery, just focus on using and enjoying your device.

2. Overnight charging can add stress to some batteries.

Charging your device up to 100% or letting it drain to 0% until it shuts down does put extra stress on the battery and can shorten its life. That's why it can make sense to charge your devices occasionally throughout the day rather than keeping them plugged in while you sleep. Newer electronics will actually stop charging at 100%. But then each time the charge drops to 99%, charging will resume.

3. Keep it cool, but not cold.

One absolute in battery care is don't let your device get warmer than 95 degrees. Keep it out of the sun, and never leave it in a hot vehicle. If the device does get hot, don't go to the other extreme and put it in the freezer. Just place it in the shade or take the cover off for a while.

4. Use less power.

It sounds simple, but one of the easiest ways to put less stress on the battery is to use less power. You can close energy-draining apps and functions when you're not using them, and you can activate energy-saving settings like putting the device to sleep sooner. Another easy way to reduce battery use is to activate the “airplane mode” button every now and then. You may be inconvenienced by a temporary pause on receiving e-mails or phone calls, but it might help you focus on that movie you're watching, the trail you're hiking or the conversation with your dinner companions.

If you're the kind of person who likes to turn in their electronics every couple years for the latest versions, these recommendations likely won't apply. But if you're someone who wants your devices to last longer, these suggestions can help prolong battery life.



5 Ideas for an Organized, Intentional Laundry Space

Having an organized and decorated laundry room can ease the weight of your to-do list and the tension you feel from the day-to-day grind.

It can also help keep your laundry routine simple, orderly and organized. Consider these tips from the laundry experts at Swash.com:



1 Think like a minimalist.

Empty your laundry space and sort through what you need and what you don't. Eliminating the extras leaves room to evaluate your space. Consider whether you could organize differently to make frequently used items more accessible and make the most of your storage space. Cutting down on clutter may even make it possible to incorporate shelves or cabinets that add stylish functionality.

2 Update your space with open shelving.

Open laundry shelves offer a sense of more space, and the horizontal lines can lend a sense of calm. For an easy and attractive upgrade, try hanging 2-3 open shelves within easy reach. If you're hesitant about the open feel, limit to just one shelf for the everyday necessities and keep the rest of your laundry supplies out of sight in a complementing cabinet. Baskets offer another option for concealing your belongings, whether you use them on the open shelves or inside cabinets to keep things tidy and clutter-free.

3 Create a practical workspace.

Mundane laundry chores like folding can be more enjoyable when you have a comfortable, dedicated space for the job. An open counter or table that folds down from the wall gives you the surface you need to fold clothing within your laundry space without disrupting the rest of the house. Other ways to add practical space include areas for sorting garments that need special attention and a place to hang items that shouldn't be dried in the dryer.

4 Use colors and materials that evoke calm.

Natural materials and a neutral color palette can lend to a more peaceful space. Lighter neutral colors reduce stress and anxiety, promote relaxation and can even make a space feel more expansive. For a calm, refreshing area, start with a base of white then add natural textures like woven baskets, faux or real plants and marble stone accents in the tile flooring or backsplash. Add a calming color like blue to evoke the tranquility of the sky or ocean, or consider green to incorporate the soothing effects of nature.

5 Invest in products that bring you joy.

Choose quality pieces that aren't overly trendy and will stand the test of time. Consider how your investment of laundry decor, including your washer and dryer, will serve you in the space in the coming years.

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How Electric Vehicles Impact the Grid

By Katherine Loving



Last year saw a record increase in electric vehicle (EV) sales, and experts are predicting that by 2035, many major vehicle manufacturers will only produce electric models.

A 2021 study by the Department of Energy showed that increased electrification, or replacement of direct fossil fuel use with electricity, would account for a 38% increase in electricity demand by 2050—and EVs will play a major role in this increased electrification.

The need for more electricity will have a major impact on the nation's grid, which means power supply and grid infrastructure must be carefully planned to accommodate the increased need for electricity.

EV charging presents new challenges in maintaining the electric grid. Fully charging an EV battery requires the same amount of electricity needed to power a home during peak energy use times. However, EV charging is a concentrated pull of energy over an extended period, which can add stress to the local power grid by increasing the amount of electricity a utility has to provide. Additionally, the neighborhood transformer needs adequate capacity to handle the increased load. EV charging can shorten the lifespan of transformers by straining and overloading their capacity if they are not matched to a neighborhood's energy needs.

Public power districts and electric cooperatives are currently identifying ways to manage this new pattern of electricity use, though exact strategies will vary based on each utility's unique needs. Analyzing energy load patterns or identifying where and when the local grid has spikes in demand can provide electric utilities with

data on where to place higher-capacity transformers. This analysis can also provide a picture of overall energy use and patterns to help forecast energy consumption for the future. Planning system maintenance and upgrades are also part of that long-range forecasting; however, this has been recently complicated by supply-chain issues with transformers, with wait times that are upwards of one year.

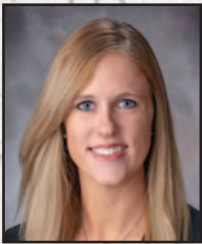
EV owners can play a role in reducing energy costs and system stress associated with charging. Check with your local electric utility to see if they offer an EV charging rate. Typically, an EV rate incentivizes charging during the night, when electricity demand and wholesale energy rates are lower. Charging at night is also a great way to ease demand in your neighborhood, even without a special EV rate.

Another potential change on the horizon is a new energy peak time. EV drivers that plug-in to charge as soon as they return home from work would create even more electricity demand during this busy time of day. But if EV drivers use a timer to schedule charging at night, the electricity demand could be spread over a longer period to reduce stress on the grid. This would be especially beneficial for neighborhoods with multiple EV drivers.

EVs are only expected to increase in number. Public power districts and electric co-ops and EV owners each have roles to play in accommodating increased demand. If you own an EV, let your electric utility know so they can better plan energy demand for you and your neighbors.



A Guide to the 108th Nebraska Legislature State Senator Directory



District 1 471-2733

Julie Slama, Peru

Slama was appointed to the Unicameral in 2019. She is a graduate of Yale University and is currently enrolled in UNL law school.



District 2 471-2613

Robert Clements, Elmwood

Clements' family has owned Elmwood's American Exchange Bank for 79 years. He holds a B.S. in mathematics from UNL and is a retired banker and insurance agent.



District 3 471-2627

Carol Blood, Bellevue

Blood served on the Bellevue City Council and as director of the La Vista Area Chamber of Commerce. She was the Democratic nominee for governor in 2022.



District 4 471-2621

R. Brad Von Gillern, Omaha

Von Gillern holds a degree from UNL in construction management engineering. He currently serves as director of business development at Lueder Construction.



District 5 471-2710

Mike McDonnell, Omaha

McDonnell served in the Omaha fire department for 24 years. He was the president of the Omaha Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO.



District 6 471-2714

Machaela Cavanaugh, Omaha

Cavanaugh holds a master's degree in public administration from UNO. She worked at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska.



District 7 471-2721

Tony Vargas, Omaha

Vargas has a master's degree in education. He served on the Omaha Public Schools Board and recently ran for Nebraska's District 2 Congressional seat.



District 8 471-2722

Megan Hunt, Omaha

Hunt holds a master's degree in political communication from UNO. She is the owner of Hello Holiday, a boutique and e-commerce company.



District 9 471-2723

John Cavanaugh, Omaha

Cavanaugh served as the Assistant Douglas County Public Defender. He holds both a master's degree in environmental policy and a J.D. from Vermont Law School.



District 10 471-2718

Wendy DeBoer, Omaha

DeBoer graduated from UNL Law School and is working on her Ph.D. in Christian theology at UNO. She teaches philosophy and religious studies.



District 11 471-2612

Terrell McKinney, Omaha

McKinney helped coach wrestling at Omaha North Magnet High School. He is a community organizer and co-hosts a weekly podcast.



District 12 471-2623

Merv Riepe, Omaha

Riepe is a Navy veteran and worked in the field of healthcare management. He was first elected to serve in the Nebraska Legislature in 2018 and was re-elected in 2022.



District 13 471-2727

Justin Wayne, Omaha

Wayne is a lawyer and former Omaha Public Schools board member. He is the CEO of Trailblazers Constructors, LLC. He served as the chair of the Legislature's Urban Affairs Committee.



District 14 471-2730

John Arch, La Vista

Arch holds an MBA from UNO. He worked in the health care division at Boys Town for 23 years. He served as the chair of the Health & Human Services Committee in the Nebraska Legislature.



District 15 471-2629

Lynne Walz, Fremont

Walz is a realtor and former teacher with a degree in elementary education. In 2018, she ran for Lt. Governor on the Democratic gubernatorial ticket.



District 16 471-2728

Ben Hansen, Blair

Hansen is a graduate of Wayne State College. He is the owner of Hansen Chiropractic Wellness Center. In the Legislature, he served as the chair of the Business and Labor Committee.



District 17 471-2716

Joni Albrecht, Thurston

Albrecht served on the Papillion City Council and on the Sarpy County Board. She farms in Thurston County.



District 18 471-2801

Christy Armendariz, Omaha

Armendariz currently works as a Strategic Sourcing Specialist for Nebraska Methodist Health System. She holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and has earned an MBA from Nebraska Methodist College.



District 19 471-2929

Robert Dover, Norfolk

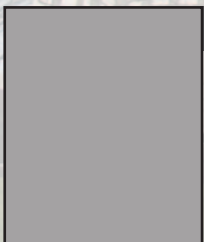
Dover was appointed to serve in the legislature after Senator Mike Flood resigned his seat to run for Congress. He has worked as a real estate entrepreneur.



District 20 471-2622

John Fredrickson, Omaha

Fredrickson has a bachelor's degree in social work from New York University and an M.A. in social work from Columbia University. He currently works as a mental health professional.



District 21 471-2673

Vacant

District 21 will become vacant as soon as Senator Hilgers resigns his seat to serve as the State's Attorney General. An appointment will fill the position during the 2023 Legislative session.



District 22 471-2715

Mike Moser, Columbus

Moser served as Mayor of Columbus. He has a degree in speech communications from UNL, and is the owner of Columbus Music.



District 23 471-2719

Bruce Bostelman, Brainard

Bostelman holds a degree in business management from Bellevue University and served in the U.S. Air Force for 20 years. He serves as the chair of the Natural Resources Committee in the Legislature.



District 24 471-2756

Jana Hughes, Seward

Hughes holds a degree in industrial engineering from Texas A&M University. She previously worked at Hughes Brothers Manufacturing. Hughes has been on the Seward board of education since 2018.



District 25 471-2731

Suzanne Geist, Lincoln

Geist owns a style consulting business. She has a degree in broadcast journalism from UNL. She has held positions with the American Heart Association and serves on the board for Clinic with a Heart.



District 26 471-2610

George Dungan, Lincoln

Dungan holds a J.D. from American University and now serves as a public defender. He has served on the Board of Trustees of the Lincoln Bar Association.



District 27 471-2632

Anna Wishart, Lincoln

Wishart has a degree in film studies from Middlebury College in Vermont. She served as a member of the Lincoln Airport Authority board.



District 28 471-2633

Jane Raybould, Lincoln

Raybould earned a bachelor's degree in political science, business, and French from Creighton University and a Master's in Russian studies from Georgetown University. She has served on the Lincoln City Council since 2015.



District 29 471-2734

Eliot Bostar, Lincoln

Bostar served as executive director of the Nebraska Conservation Voters and as a member of the Lincoln Electric System's administrative board of directors.



District 30 471-2620

Myron Dorn, Adams

Dorn is a lifelong farmer and graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He served as chairman of the Gage County Board of Supervisors.



District 31 471-2327

Kathleen Kauth, Omaha

Kauth was appointed to fill the District 31 legislative seat after the death of Senator Rich Pahls. She and her husband opened a mediation and consulting business where she specializes in Eldercare Mediation.



District 32 471-2711

Tom Brandt, Plymouth

Brandt is a farmer and livestock feeder. He holds a degree in agriculture from UNL and served as chairman of the Southeast Nebraska Corn Growers.



District 33 471-2712

Steve Halloran, Hastings

Halloran is a graduate of Creighton University School of Business Administration. He serves as chair of the Legislature's Agriculture Committee.



District 34 471-2630

Loren Lippincott, Central City

Lippincott holds a degree in broadcast journalism from UNL. He served as a pilot in the U.S. Air Force, retiring with the rank of captain. He went on to work as a commercial airline pilot at Delta Air Lines.



District 35 471-2617

Ray Aguilar, Grand Island

Aguilar served in the Legislature from 1999-2008. He was appointed by Governor Johanns and served as the body's first Latino legislator. He operates a commercial cleaning service business.



District 36 471-2642

Rick Holdcroft, Bellevue

Holdcroft holds a degree in electrical engineering from UNL where he graduated through the ROTC program. He is a veteran who spent 28 years in the U.S. Navy.

**District 37 471-2726****John Lowe, Kearney**

Lowe is a real estate investor. He previously owned Platte Valley Brewery in Kearney. He is a former member of the Kearney Planning Commission.

**District 38 471-2732****Dave Murman, Glenvil**

Murman is a dairy farmer and former president of the Nebraska State Dairy Association. He is a former member of the Sandy Creek School Board.

**District 39 471-2885****Lou Ann Linehan, Elkhorn**

Linehan served as chair of the Legislature's Revenue Committee. She was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State by President George W. Bush.

**District 40 471-2801****Barry DeKay, Niobrara**

DeKay is a rancher. He served on the Nebraska Public Power District board of directors. He also served as President of the Nebraska Rural Electric Association board of directors.

**District 41 471-2631****Tom Briese, Albion**

Briese is a farmer with a law degree from UNL. He served as the chairman of the Legislature's General Affairs Committee and on the Boone Central School Board.

**District 42 471-2729****Mike Jacobson, North Platte**

Jacobson was appointed to fill the seat vacated by Senator Mike Groene. He is the founder and CEO of NebraskaLand Bank.

**District 43 471-2628****Tom Brewer, Gordon**

Brewer served 36 years in the Army retiring as a Colonel. He served as the chair of the Legislature's Government, Military, and Veteran Affairs Committee.

**District 44 471-2805****Teresa Ibach, Sumner**

Ibach holds a B.S. from the College of Human Resources and Family Science at UNL. She was a property manager for 28 years, and she and her husband live on the family farm.

**District 45 471-2615****Rita Sanders, Bellevue**

Sanders is the former mayor of Bellevue. She is a commercial real-estate developer and owns Richmond Senior Living Retirement Campus in Bellevue.

**District 46 471-2720****Danielle Conrad, Lincoln**

Conrad served in the Nebraska Legislature from 2007-2015. She worked as the executive director of ACLU Nebraska.

**District 47 471-2616****Steve Erdman, Bayard**

Erdman is a farmer. He served on his local school board and on the Morrill County Board of Commissioners.

**District 48 471-2802****Brian Hardin, Gering**

Hardin holds an M.A. from Denver Seminary. He is an entrepreneur with an emphasis on consulting for foreign businesses looking to enter the U.S. market.

**District 49 471-2725****Jen Day, Omaha**

Day holds a degree in Political Science from UNO. She owns and operates Artis Strength & Fitness gym in Omaha.

Write to your State Senator

If you want to write your state senator during the 2023 session, please address correspondence to:

Senator (Last Name)
District # State Capitol
PO Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604



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E04701

Having a generator on hand, whether portable or permanent, may sound like a great idea for times when the power goes out, but misusing one is dangerous. Although they can help light your home or cool your perishable food when the neighborhood is dark, if used incorrectly you could have a much bigger problem on your hands.

When using a portable version, there are two ways to connect it to a home. The first way is with a powered circuit panel that has a power transfer switch, which monitors incoming voltage from the utility line. The circuit panel and transfer switch should always be installed by a qualified electrician. The second option is to plug in a limited number of home appliances directly into a fuel-powered portable generator with heavy-duty extension cords.

Never try to power your home by plugging a generator into a wall



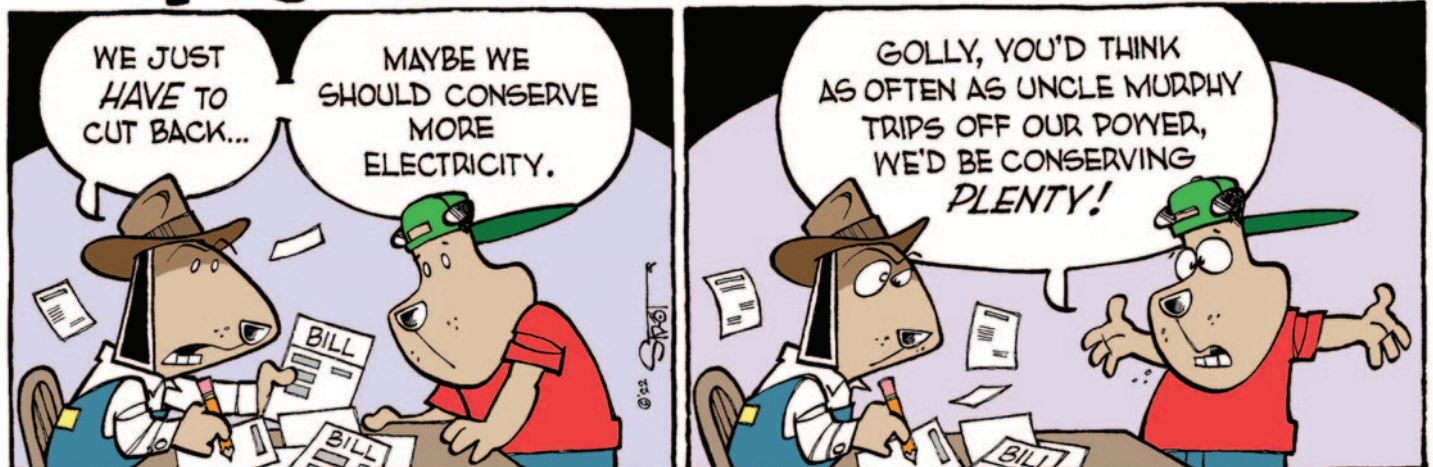
outlet. This is known as back feeding, and it could electrocute a neighbor or an electric lineman working to restore power. A permanent generator must also have a transfer switch installed by a qualified electrician to avoid back feeding. Because of the harm an incorrectly powered generator can cause, the transfer switch is required by the National Electrical Code.

The primary hazards of using a portable generator are not pretty. They include carbon monoxide

(CO) poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust, electric shock or electrocution, and fire, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). According to the agency, most of the deaths and injuries associated with portable generators are from CO poisoning when generators are used indoors or in partially enclosed spaces. A permanent or standby generator also has significant risks if not installed by a qualified electrician. Installing one is extremely dangerous and not a Do-It-Yourself project.

Portable versions are less expensive than permanent or standby models and power-only select appliances. The most expensive permanent generators, standby versions that are permanently installed and power most of the appliances in your home, are convenient but pricey. The average permanent system costs around \$10,000.

Murphy



Stay safe during severe winter weather

When severe winter weather hits, power outages can occur. Roadways can be dangerous. Do all you can to prepare your pantry, home and car for the next severe winter storm. Once you are ready, watch and listen for weather bulletins mentioning winter storms, blizzard warnings or windchill dangers.

Supplies for the storm: At home, have enough nonperishable food, water and medical supplies/medicines for 72 hours. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest storing one gallon of water per person per day. Have cell phones and chargers, as well as backup charger sources, ready. Gather important documents and medical records. Protect your pets and make sure you have enough supplies for them as well. Also have these items ready: a first-aid kit, a flashlight and batteries, hand sanitizer, blankets and warm clothing.

Readying the house: Weatherproof your home ahead of winter by caulking windows and doors and looking for other air leaks that need attention. Inspect chimney flues

for wood stoves or wood-burning fireplaces. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on each floor of your home. Protect pipes from freezing.

Prepare your vehicle with an emergency kit: A kit typically includes battery booster cables, an ice scraper, a portable shovel, flashlights, a signaling cone, backup batteries for the flashlight, roadside triangles, a reflective vest, a basic first-aid kit (add in what is needed for individual needs) and a cell phone charger.

Your car or truck should also be stocked with gloves, a blanket, a rain poncho, rags, boots and a hat. It cannot hurt to also have bottled water and nonperishable snacks in your vehicle in case you get stranded.

Prepare your vehicle: Complete annual maintenance, test the car battery and cooling system, use winter tires and replace them if the tread is less than 2/32 of an inch, check tire pressure and wiper blades, add wiper fluid rated for less than minus 30 degrees and keep the gas tank at least half full.

Know that when the power goes out, Nebraska's electric utilities work hard to restore it safely and efficiently.

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Q Are smart home technologies energy efficient? Will making these technology upgrades save me money?

A : You've probably heard the term "smart home" a lot in recent years. If you're curious about what makes a home smart, how it can boost energy efficiency and help you save money, you have come to the right place.

"Smart" was originally an acronym for self-monitoring analysis and reporting technology. This refers to technology that can be programmed for automation or controlled remotely using Bluetooth or Wi-Fi from a smart phone app or online. A smart home is one with automated control of appliances and systems, such as lighting fixtures and heating and cooling systems.

There are multiple reasons people choose to automate their homes, including convenience, energy efficiency and security. Just because a product is smart, don't assume it's energy efficient. Added connectivity, lights and touchscreens can actually increase your energy use. Always look for the EnergyStar logo when shopping, which certifies the products meet standards for energy efficiency.

Energy savings typically come from automating the systems, devices and appliances in your home to use less energy or use energy when it costs less. Here are a few ways you can start implementing smart technology at home.

Smart Upgrades for the Entire Home

Because heating and cooling account for the most energy use in a home, these systems are the best place to look for energy savings.

Smart thermostats offer features and functionality that can help you save energy and money without thinking about it, including learning preferences and automatically setting temperatures. Geofencing is a feature that uses your phone's location to gauge your distance from home and adjusts the temperature accordingly.

Smart thermostats also let you control the thermostat from anywhere with an internet connection, and



Smart window coverings, such as these Serena Smart Roller Shades, can help save energy in the winter and summer with app capabilities and preset schedules.

Photograph provided by Serena by Lutron

automatic software updates use new algorithms to maximize energy savings. Features vary by product, so be sure to choose the one that's right for you.

Smart window coverings are increasing in popularity and availability. They can help save energy both in the winter and summer by operating based on the temperature of the room or a preset schedule.

Smart lighting can help you remotely control lights in your home, based on occupancy or a preset schedule. Lighting also can be paired with home security systems.

You can use smart outlets and power strips to control devices from outside the home or manage use based on load. For example, you can plug your computer and devices into a load-sensing power strip that turns off peripheral devices, such as monitors and printers, when your computer is not in use.

Smart Streaming for the Living Room

Many people use Wi-Fi to stream TV shows and movies. Smart TVs with built-in streaming functionality offer the most efficient way to stream content. If your TV cannot connect to the internet for streaming, opt for a streaming media player, such as Roku or Apple TV. They use 15 times less energy than a gaming console to stream the same shows and movies.

Save on Suds in the Laundry Room

Smart washing machines can be scheduled for off-peak energy times (when people in your community use less energy), which is helpful if your electric rate is based on the time of day energy is used. Smart clothes dryers can shut off



Smart thermostats, including this one from Ecobee, offer features and functionality that can help you save energy and money. Photograph provided by Ecobee

automatically when your clothes are dry.

Smart Savings in the Kitchen

There are many options for smart appliances in the heart of the home. Smart refrigerators offer energy-

saving features, such as notifications when the door is left open. Digital screens that show the contents to keep you from opening the door.

Smart ovens let you preheat when you are on your way home or check if you forgot to turn off the oven when you are away. Toasters, range hoods, microwaves and countertop ice makers are among the growing list of additional smart kitchen gadgets available.

More smart home technologies are on the horizon, bringing more ways to operate the various systems, devices and appliances in your home.

As you think about ways to make your home smarter, remember to look for products that use the same smart home apps, which will make these new technologies even easier to manage.

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Give Quick and Easy Meals a Fun Spin

Work, school, social events, and more can make the winter months feel frantic and it can often seem like you're running out of time. This seasonal time crunch makes it even more difficult to answer the age-old, mealtime question kids are always asking: "What are we having?"

To help solve that daily meal dilemma and discover family-pleasing recipes that take 35 minutes or less, the RAGÚ Meal Wheel lets the entire family take an active role in choosing what's on the menu. Simply ask one of your kids to click the "spin" button to find delicious, quick-and-easy recipes like Chicken and Broccoli Alfredo with Fettuccine and Mini Turkey Sloppy Joes.

Both easy-to-make recipes feature RAGÚ sauces, which come in a variety of taste-tempting classic flavors and styles, perfect for any mealtime occasion. Created 85 years ago by an Italian mother using a family recipe she brought to the United States from Naples, Italy, the sauces are made from quality ingredients like vine-ripened tomatoes, hearty vegetables, Italian cheeses, herbs, and spices, allowing you to quickly create affordable, crowd-pleasing meals for their busy families.

To find more quick and mouthwatering recipes to feed your family during the chilly winter months, visit RAGU.com/meal-wheel.



Chicken & Broccoli Alfredo

- 1 **tablespoon butter**
- 1 1/2 **pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into strips**
- 1 **jar RAGÚ Classic Alfredo Sauce**
- 1 **package (12 ounces) frozen broccoli florets, thawed**
- 1 **package (12 ounces) fettuccine pasta**
- grated Parmesan cheese, for topping (optional)**

In large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, melt butter. Cook chicken, in batches if necessary, stirring occasionally, until chicken is thoroughly cooked.

Remove chicken and set aside.

In same skillet, add sauce and broccoli; stir. Bring to boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, stirring occasionally, until broccoli is heated through, about 5 minutes. Stir in chicken and cook, stirring occasionally, until cooked through, about 2 minutes.

In separate pan, cook fettuccine according to package instructions.

Serve chicken, broccoli and sauce over hot fettuccine and sprinkle grated Parmesan cheese on top, if desired.



Solve the daily meal dilemma with a spin of the RAGÚ Meal Wheel. Scan the QR Code for the link, then simply click the button to spin the wheel.



Mini Turkey Sloppy Joes

- 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup diced onion
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 cup finely diced carrots
- 1 medium green pepper, diced
- 1 medium red pepper, diced
- 1 jar RAGÚ Simply Chunky Marinara Sauce
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon ground mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- mini buns

In large skillet over medium heat, heat extra-virgin olive oil. When hot, add onion and garlic; sauté until onion is translucent.

Add ground turkey. Break up meat and stir frequently until browned. Add carrots, green pepper and red pepper. Cook 5 minutes until vegetables begin to soften.

Add marinara sauce, Worcestershire sauce, ground mustard, salt and pepper. Stir and bring to boil. Reduce heat to simmer and partially cover pan. Cook 10 minutes.

Serve on mini buns.

Italian Sausage Minestrone

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 lb. Italian Sausage 2 large carrots, chopped 2 celery ribs, chopped 1 medium onion, chopped 6 garlic cloves, minced 3 Tablespoons olive oil 7 cups reduced sodium chicken broth 2 15 oz. cans cannellini or white kidney beans, rinsed and drained | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 14 oz. cans fire-roasted diced tomatoes, undrained 2 bay leaves 1 Tablespoon Italian seasoning 1 Tablespoon tomato paste 1 cup ditalini or other small pasta Shredded or shaved Parmesan cheese |
|---|--|

Brown sausage in Dutch oven, drain. In the same pan, sauté the carrots, celery, onion and garlic in olive oil until tender. Stir in broth, beans, tomatoes, bay leaves, Italian seasoning, tomato paste, and sausage. Bring to a boil, stir in ditalini, return to boil, reduce heat and cook uncovered 6 – 8 minutes. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes, remove bay leaves and serve with cheese.

Deb Chapin, Merna, Nebraska

Buttermilk Chocolate Cake

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 3/4 cup flour 1 1/3 cup sugar 1 teaspoon soda 1/2 teaspoon salt 6 tablespoons cocoa | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 cup high-grade shortening 1 cup buttermilk 1 teaspoon vanilla 2 eggs, unbeaten |
|---|---|

Sift dry ingredients into bowl; add shortening, buttermilk, and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Beat 2 minutes. Add eggs, and beat 2 minutes, scraping bowl constantly. Bake layers 30-35 minutes or loaf 40-45 minutes in a 350-degree oven. Note: I used powdered buttermilk with water according to instructions on box. This is my Grandma Gladys Runge's recipe.

Amy Bashtovoi, Sidney, Nebraska

Chocolate Sauce for Cake

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 rounded Tablespoons flour 2 heaping Tablespoons cocoa 1/2 cup sugar 1/2 teaspoon salt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 cup white Karo syrup 1 1/4 cup water 1 teaspoon vanilla 1 Tablespoon butter 1/2 cup cream |
|--|---|

Sift flour and cocoa and put into a saucepan. Add sugar and salt and mix well. Turn on burner and add syrup and water. Cook until thick, stirring. Turn off heat and add vanilla, butter and cream; stir. Serve over cake.

Carolyn Golick, Hastings, Nebraska

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GENERATOR SAFETY

USE BACKUP POWER SAFELY

When used properly, portable and standby generators are a great option to provide backup power during brownouts or blackouts.

Learn how to use generators safely with the following tips:

GENERATORS

Location



Always keep generators at least **20 feet** away from your home



Never operate a generator in an **enclosed space**



Make sure the generator has **3-4 feet** of clear space above and on all sides for proper ventilation



Keep generators **away** from doors, windows, and vents



Always **direct exhaust** away from your home

Use



Always use **grounded cords** and inspect cords for damage prior to use



Use the **proper cord** for the wattage being used



Always use **GFCI protection**



Make sure to start / stop generators when **no electrical loads** are connected



Keep generators **dry, do not operate when wet**, and refuel when cool

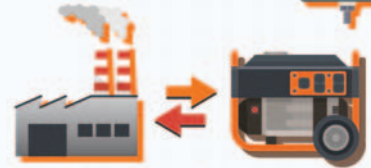


Do not overload generators



Do not plug a generator directly into your home, connect items being powered **directly to the generator**

TRANSFER SWITCHES



Transfer switches, whether manual or automatic, allow you to choose between **utility power** or **backup generator power**



Transfer switches are the only way to **safely power** your home's electrical system



Using a transfer switch **prevents backfeeding**. This occurs when your generator becomes a power source for the **surrounding area** and can damage your home, your neighbor's homes, and injure workers trying to restore power

CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) POISONING PREVENTION



Improper use and installation of generators could **cause CO poisoning**



CO can kill in as little as **5 minutes**



If you experience CO poisoning symptoms, **get fresh air, do not reenter areas, and call 911.**



Make sure your home has **carbon monoxide alarms** outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home

Symptoms of CO poisoning



Dizziness



Headaches



Nausea



Tiredness

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