

NEBRASKA

Magazine

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January 2024

A WARRIOR'S PALATE

Santee Chef Embraces
Traditional Native
American Foods

Inside:

- Reaching Markets Through Technology
- Staying Ahead of the Threat • Stay Warm and Save Energy



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**Volume 78
Number 1
January 2024**



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Published monthly by the Nebraska Rural Electric Association, 1244 K Street, Box 82048, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501, (402) 475-4988.

Advertising in the *Nebraska Magazine* does not imply endorsement for products by the Nebraska Rural Electric Association. Correspondence should be sent to Wayne Price, Editor, *Nebraska Magazine*, Box 82048, Lincoln, NE 68501.

The *Nebraska Magazine* is printed by the Aradius Group, 4700 F Street, Omaha, NE 68117. Form 3579 should be sent to *Nebraska Magazine*, Box 82048, Lincoln, NE 68501.

Periodicals postage paid at Lincoln, Neb. POSTMASTER: send address changes to *Nebraska Magazine*, 1244 K Street, Box 82048, Lincoln, NE 68501.

Publication numbers are USPS 071-630 and ISSN 0193-4937.

Subscriber Services: Cost of subscription for consumers of participating member-systems is \$2.14 per year (17.8 cents per month), plus periodicals postage paid from equity accruing to the consumer. For nonmembers, a subscription is \$10 per year or \$20 for three years, plus local and state tax. Single copy, \$2.50.

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GROW Nebraska and the Nebraska Tourism Commission have collaborated to present a technology and marketing conference for small business owners and entrepreneurs. The conference will be hosted at the Younes Center in Kearney, Neb. on Feb. 29, 2024.

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Anthony Warrior travels around Nebraska and other Midwestern states sharing his story and encouraging a return to traditional food pathways. See the related article on page 6. Photograph by Tim Trudell



Wayne Price

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Cooking Safe and Smart with Electricity

Several years ago I worked in marketing and communications for a public power district. We were heavily into promoting all-electric homes within the district and came up with the slogan of “Go Gas...Go Boom!” Looking back I probably should have played up the efficiency benefits of switching to electric appliances instead of trying to scare the daylights out of our customers.

Both gas and electric stoves are similar in that they transfer heat from the burner to the cookware in order to boil, simmer, and saute dishes. Heat can be lost to the surrounding air when using an open flame on your gas stovetop. Because electric burners make direct contact with pots and pans, you're more likely to retain heat within them, leading to better efficiency.

However, it needs to be said that there are some dangers associated with gas appliances. A Stanford study last year found that cooking with gas stoves can raise indoor levels of the carcinogen benzene above those found in secondhand smoke. Stanford researchers also showed that gas-burning stoves inside U.S. homes leak methane with a climate impact comparable to the carbon dioxide emissions from about 500,000 gasoline-powered cars.

Cooking with gas can pose safety risks, but if you must use a gas stove, there are precautions you can take. Proper ventilation, such as opening windows and using a range hood, can help reduce negative effects. However, if you're concerned about the dangers of gas stoves, you may want to consider switching to an electric stove. The Inflation Reduction Act provides rebates for up to \$840 for purchasing a new electric stove and an additional \$500 for converting from gas to electric.

If you're not a fan of traditional electric stoves, induction cooktops are worth considering. Induction cooktops use electricity and are preferred by many over gas or electric stoves. They generate heat within the pan by creating an electromagnetic current that interacts with magnetic molecules. Induction cooking offers multiple benefits. There are no harmful fumes that can cause cancer, asthma and other respiratory illnesses, and because there is no open flame the cooking surface remains cool to the touch. Induction cooktops are also easy to clean, energy-efficient, and heat up quickly. Additionally, they provide precise temperature control compared to other cooking surfaces.



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 Public Power in Nebraska

This is always my favorite time of year, bringing in a new year. It feels like a new beginning to a new year. It's like the feeling of starting a New Year's resolution but following through with that resolution.

The Nebraska Rural Electric Association (NREA) is the statewide organization of your local power district or electric cooperative. We provide value through essential services like job training and safety training, legislative representation, regulatory compliance, legal assistance, educational programming, and publishing the *Nebraska Magazine*. It is often thought that an organization such as a statewide organization can use the resources of many to provide services that the individual power district or electric cooperative does not have the resources to accomplish.

Using those resources wisely also allows NREA to keep abreast of issues at the state and federal level, whether that is analyzing laws that impact public power operations or advocating for rural Nebraska and everything in between.

There is a long list of issues that we track, but the basis for all the things we pay attention to revolves around how it will impact our members (your local power district or cooperative) and their electric consumers in rural Nebraska (you) as it pertains to reliability, affordability, and non-discriminatory rate design.

That is the hallmark of public power in Nebraska and there is not a public power district or electric cooperative in the State of Nebraska that does not follow that philosophy.

While that is a broad statement, the idea of local control provides meaning to those principles in your local public power boardrooms. All decisions, aside from regulatory and state statutes, are made at the local level. Therefore, the meaning of those principles may be a little different in Benkelman, Nebraska than it is in Pilger, Nebraska.

We find those differences of opinion on the meaning of policies throughout the state. Should we all follow one meaning? I would say no. I come from an area of the state that I consider the Sandhills. I am pretty sure some people would argue that point with me saying that's not the Sandhills, they are the true Sandhills. Are we both wrong or both correct? I am also the General Manager at Custer Public Power District, if that helps with the reference to the question.

My point is that we are all public power. We all have the same goal of providing excellent service that is reliable and affordable. We want everybody to be treated the same, and we wake up every morning with those thoughts in mind.

I hope you all have a joyous new year.

By Tim Trudell

A Warrior's Palate

Santee Chef Embraces Traditional Native American Foods

The diabetes test monitor showed a glucose reading (blood sugar) above 300. The average glucose for a non-diabetic is 100. To be considered in control, a diabetic's glucose should be about 150. Anthony Warrior knew he needed to do something to bring his diabetes under control. He didn't know at the time that it would end up creating opportunities to share Indigenous traditions.

Warrior, a human relations manager at the Nebraska Indian Community College based in Santee, grew up around food. His mother ran a restaurant for several years in Bloomfield. Warrior, himself, worked in the food industry as a chef at casinos and restaurants. So, it was easy to grab something – usually unhealthy, but delicious – to cook or eat. As he aged, the citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, gained weight and became unhealthy.

Knowing he needed to do something to control his diabetes, Warrior turned to his Indigenous roots.

"I was starting to have tingling in my feet, in my hands," he said. "Neuropathy was setting in. I'm not going to kill myself anymore."

Seeking healthy eating options, Warrior researched meal plans, eventually finding himself on a path involving traditional foods used by Native Americans long before the first contact with Europeans.

"The traditional cooking ways has been kind of a lifelong journey," he said. "From when we were kids going to ceremonies, and we'd see traditional foods around there. But, then, during my teenage years, I noticed things changing. People were bringing joke food, like bologna. There were hot dogs and sauerkraut. Then, pies and cakes. People couldn't sustain themselves for three days of dancing because they were hooked up to insulin

or too exhausted to dance."

Leaning on traditional food, such as fresh vegetables and meat like deer, elk and bison, Warrior began changing his diet. Bringing in food to cook for lunch in a small kitchen at the Knox County campus, others took notice.

"No one had seen me eat a vegetable before," Warrior joked.

But they appreciated the meals he made. Soon, coworkers and students brought in items for him to use to create meals. The tradeoff was easy – Warrior would cook the meals and everyone else would clean afterwards.

Owning a catering business on the side – Warrior's Palate – the chef sought an avenue to share his knowledge of traditional foods along with a platform to help educate people.

"Nowadays, when we determine hunger, when we say our brain is hungry, we're in an addiction process,"

Warrior said. "The stuff we eat today makes your body say that. It's like after you drink a big can of soda, you're thirsty again in 20-30 minutes because your mind is telling you that you need to drink more soda. Your body craves more.

"Back in the day, when you had that whole sustainable food, a lot of times we didn't eat for flavor like we do today. People knew what it took to sustain a village. They

had to ensure food was going to last through the winter until the growing season came."

Indigenous people didn't eat three meals a day, and sometimes went days between meals, Warrior said. They ate to sustain themselves, he said.

"When they went on hunting parties, hunters would take a small pouch of cornmeal to eat over the next few days," Warrior said. "The corn was so energy-packed. It was cultivated that way. The least amount of food that it takes to make you full was a prized product."

Today, Warrior travels around Nebraska and other Midwestern states sharing his story and encouraging a return to traditional food pathways.

Dressed in Muskogee regalia, he entertained people



Anthony Warrior prepared a traditional Native American meal at the University of Nebraska-Omaha featuring bison meatloaf, three sisters salad and strawberry boiled bread in a wild berry pudding.

attending a spring dinner at the University of Nebraska-Omaha while also showing them the benefits of a traditional Native American diet. Guests dined on bison meatloaf, three sisters salad (purple hominy, bean medley and summer squash with a maple vinaigrette) and strawberry boiled bread in wild berry wojjipe (pudding).

For Dr. Brady DeSanti, director of Native American Studies at UNO, Warrior was a natural choice to be the guest speaker at the annual John Trudell Lecture Series. The series is named in honor of Trudell, a Santee Dakota who was born in Omaha, but spent much of his youth on the Santee reservation in northeastern Nebraska. Trudell served as the national chairman of the American Indian Movement and was also a poet, spoken-word musician and actor.

“The whole foodways was a good fit,” said DeSanti, a citizen of the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Nation. “Food decolonization goes back to when I was an undergrad at UNO when there was a documentary about reintroducing bison to Pine Ridge (South Dakota). Anthony points out that not only are you reestablishing a particular relationship with food, but you’re also reinvigorating those relationships with plant and animal relatives, and the land itself. So, it’s just about food. It’s sort of a cultural renaissance.”

As he continues to share his love of traditional foods, Warrior chuckles at a memory of when he was chef at a casino and management wanted to create a Native American menu.

“They wanted me to make fry bread,” he said. “That was their version of Native American food.”

He balked, because, while fry bread has become a favorite of Native Americans over the years, it’s made with processed flour. Fry bread became a dinnertime staple during early reservation life because grandmothers and mothers needed to find an easy way to feed several people.

As more people strive to eat healthier, they need to break the cycle of food marketing, Warrior said.

“Our people understood that the food we ate was genetically ingrained in us,” Warrior said. “We’re tied to this earth with food offerings. Our bodies recognize that by altering the food, we’re inviting in all the different problems, health issues, and difficulties with genetics. If we can break these behaviors, we could also explore what our bodies need, and break the addictions to sugar, fat and salts. We can start healing ourselves, our generations and the world around us.”



Anthony Warrior shares the story of how Native Americans would often take only a pouch of corn meal with them on bison hunting parties, enough to sustain them for a three-day hunt. Photographs by Tim Trudell

by Abby Berry

Keep Food Safe When the Power Goes Out

WHAT TO KEEP

While most perishable foods should be thrown out after an extended outage, there are a few items that are safe to consume after a two-hour exposure to 40+ degrees:

- hard cheeses that are properly wrapped
- butter or margarine that is properly wrapped
- taco, barbecue and soy sauces
- peanut butter, jelly, mustard, ketchup and relish

The best way to avoid illness from spoiled food during or after an outage is to follow the four-hour rule of thumb. After an outage, always smell and inspect foods before consuming and remember: when in doubt, throw it out.

Severe winds, lightning and even squirrels can temporarily cause the power to go out. We understand power outages of any length can be frustrating, especially when your fridge is stocked with perishable foods.

Extended power outages are rare, but when they occur, it's important to understand food safety measures to take to avoid illness.

Here are a few food safety tips to keep in mind before, during and after a power outage.

Before an outage

A good rule of thumb is to keep an emergency supply kit on hand. Be sure to include nonperishable food items like bottled water, powdered milk, canned goods, cereal and protein bars in your emergency kit.

If you have advance warning that an outage is possible, fill a cooler with ice--just in case the outage spans several hours. Having a cooler ready to go can buy extra time for your refrigerated, perishable items.

During an outage

If an outage occurs, do not open the refrigerator or freezer unless absolutely necessary. An unopened refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours. A half-full freezer will keep food frozen for about 24 hours and a full freezer for about 48 hours. If it looks like the power outage will last longer than four hours, move your important perishable items to an ice-filled cooler.

After an outage

If refrigerated foods have been exposed to temperatures higher than 40 degrees for more than two hours, the American Red Cross recommends discarding the items. If any foods have an unusual color, odor or texture, they should be thrown away.

Keep Food Safe During and After a Power Outage

Refrigerated or frozen foods may not be safe to eat after a power outage. Use these tips to minimize food loss and reduce risk of illness.

4 Refrigerated food will last four hours. After four hours, place refrigerated foods in a cooler with ice.

24 OR **48** Food in a half-full freezer will last 24 hours. Food in a full freezer will last 48 hours.

Food Safety Tips

1. Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
2. Throw out any food with an unusual odor, color or texture.
3. Throw out perishable food in your refrigerator after four hours without power or a cold source (like a cooler with ice).

When in doubt, throw it out!

Icons: eggs, milk, fish, cheese

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Staying Ahead of the Threat

How Rural Electric Utilities are Battling Cybersecurity Risks

Public power districts and electric cooperatives recognize the evolving cyber threat landscape that poses disruptions to Nebraska's electric grid. As responsible providers of power to our consumer-members, rural electric utilities are taking proactive measures to secure the grid.

Cyber threats, ranging from phishing to compromised passwords, have the potential to disrupt power reliability. That's why rural electric utilities are working to stay one step ahead by continually assessing vulnerabilities, monitoring emerging threats and implementing cybersecurity defense measures. By securing the grid against cyber threats, rural electric utilities ensure a more reliable power supply, reducing the risk of disruptions.

Public power districts and electric co-ops are implementing multiple cybersecurity strategies to utilize a defense-in-depth approach, emphasizing concern for our local communities and the importance of reliability for the consumers they serve.

For Custer Public Power District General Manager Rick Nelson, reliability means repairing wear-and-tear, upgrading its equipment to withstand storms and severe weather, and using technology and best practices to keep its system secure from cybersecurity issues.

"Custer Public Power District has added software with internal alarms that warn us of failed attempts or compromised equipment," he said. "We also work together with electric co-ops and public power districts across the country to develop new technologies and infrastructure, learn from each other and keep the grid's network secure. For example, we belong to E-ISAC, it serves as the central information hub for members and



partner organizations. It provides quality analysis and rapid sharing of security information on how to mitigate complex, constantly evolving threats to the grid and infrastructure. Our employees' network with other public power districts and organizations in the Nebraska Rural Electric Association to share best practices."

Rural electric utilities are deploying advanced monitoring and protection systems that continuously analyze network traffic, detect suspicious activity and alert security personnel to potential problems. Additionally, they regularly practice security audits to identify vulnerabilities, assess risks and implement necessary updates and patches to safeguard critical infrastructure.

One thing Cuming County Public Power District tries to do is be very proactive in its approach to training and education.

"The threat landscape is constantly shifting, and we like to let our employees know what to be on the watch for, said Monte Draper, technology supervisor at Cuming County PPD. "Also, as a small company we recognize we can't be the experts at everything. We're capable of a lot, but we're not afraid to ask for help from people smarter



Butler Public Power District's Kasey Kadavy (back) and Lee Janak, (front) are working to stay one step ahead by continually assessing vulnerabilities and implementing cybersecurity defense measures.

District. “By cultivating an internal culture of cybersecurity awareness, we are improving cyber knowledge and skills for all employees.”

In addition to internal measures, rural electric utilities are establishing dedicated cybersecurity points of contact so that consumers can easily identify individuals to discuss any cyber-related concerns.

Dawson Public Power District uses a lot of the standard cybersecurity tools that one would expect to see in a business environment.

“MFA, XDR, SOAR, DNS filtering, and immutable offline backups are key parts of our defense,” said Gwen Kautz, general manager of Dawson PPD. “Email filtering and employee education on phishing/smishing is a must. We are also focused on increasing network segmentation along with an aggressive stance on patch management.”

Rural electric utility consumers are regularly targeted by energy scammers, whether through false claims or messages sent as emails, or phone scams from people falsely claiming to represent the utility. By identifying and reporting these incidents, you can help play an important role in keeping our community safe from cyber threats and scams.

Public power districts and electric co-ops remain committed to providing reliable power to the consumers they serve. The top priority is to keep your information secure and your lights on.

Nebraska's rural electric utilities will continue working hard to strengthen the grid, keep data safe and ensure the long-term well-being of local communities. In the face of increasing cyber threats, these proactive measures provide a foundation for a robust and secure electric grid.

than we are. We regularly leverage outside knowledge and experience to keep our systems secure and our customer's information safe.”

Recognizing that cybersecurity is a team effort, rural electric utilities regularly engage with other utilities, industry organizations, government agencies and cybersecurity experts to share best practices, develop lessons learned and stay up to date on the latest threats. This kind of collaboration enables us to develop robust cybersecurity measures. Public power districts and electric co-ops also participate in mutual aid efforts focused on cybersecurity events, such as the Cyber Mutual Assistance Program. By working together, they are stronger and better prepared.

Public power districts and electric co-ops also understand the importance of educating all employees on the latest cybersecurity issues, which is why they provide regular trainings to inform utility staff on best practices and the significance of adhering to security protocols.

“Employee training programs foster awareness of potential threats and safe online practices,” said Clay Gibbs, general manager of Cornhusker Public Power

by James Dukesherer, NREA Director of Government Relations

Navigating the 108th Legislature: Key Issues to Watch

As you receive your issue of this month's *Nebraska Magazine*, the Nebraska Legislature is beginning its second session of the 108th Legislature. The sixty-day session plans to adjourn on April 18th leaving senators with a very short period to identify their legislative priorities, work through the hearing process and three stages of legislative debate, and finally get their bill signed into law by the governor.

The NREA government relations department has been preparing for the start of this year's legislative session for the past several months. In addition to the carryover bills from last year that are still eligible to make their way through the legislative process, an additional 600 bills will be introduced over the first ten days of the session. NREA will need to quickly evaluate these bills and make recommendations to our membership board of directors for our official association positions.

Even before all the bills have been introduced, it is clear that the NREA will have many issues we will be tracking this year. We are likely to see a bill that addresses Electric Vehicle (EV) charging and taxation in Nebraska. Currently, only public power is authorized to sell electricity by the kilowatt in Nebraska. EV charging station operators are asking for this authority and public power has provided draft language that would support this effort. We will, however, be watching the final proposed language very closely to ensure public power's existing ability to operate charging stations is not infringed upon.

The Power Review Board (PRB) is likely to be a topic of discussion during the session. The PRB is responsible for the approval of large electric generation in the state and

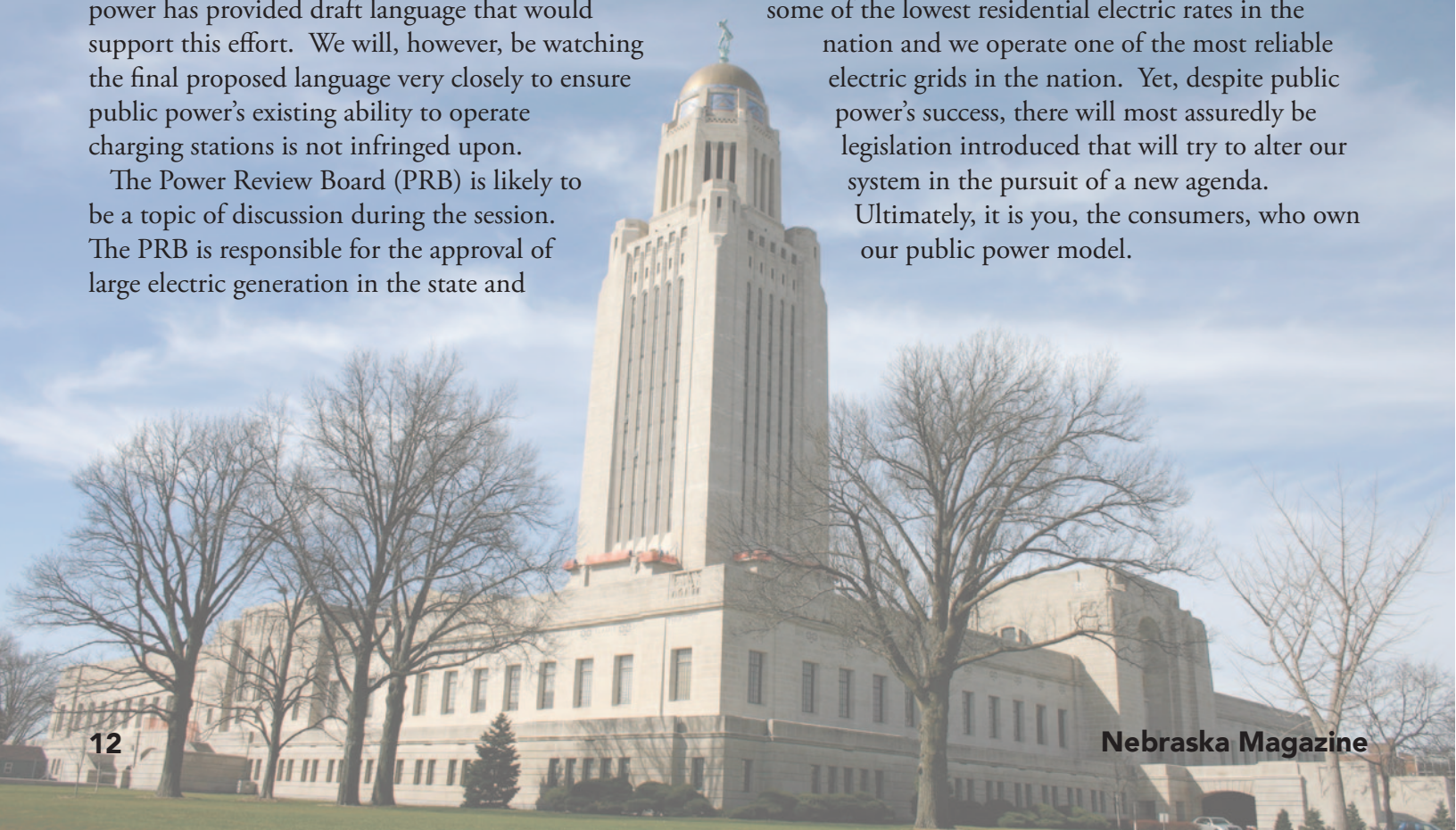
regulates the electric industry by monitoring service territory boundaries, the capabilities of Nebraska's electric generating units, and the loads that citizens place on this generation. Legislation will be introduced looking at the requirements to serve on the PRB, the number of terms allowed, and board member pay. We are also likely to see a bill addressing the PRB approval process for large-scale renewable generation.

The NREA will be pursuing our own piece of legislation this year as we will look to update the statutes dealing with our service territory boundaries and voting precincts. Our proposed bill would ensure that those individuals who can vote for and serve on their power district board of directors are served by that power district.

Additional issues including the private use of eminent domain, utility board member pay, and rural broadband deployment will likely all receive some attention during this year's legislative session.

As we begin to watch this year's session unfold, and as new bills are introduced in this legislative session, please keep an eye on issues that can impact electric rates and the reliability of our electric grid. An engaged citizenry is our strongest advocate. Nebraskans currently enjoy some of the lowest residential electric rates in the nation and we operate one of the most reliable electric grids in the nation. Yet, despite public power's success, there will most assuredly be legislation introduced that will try to alter our system in the pursuit of a new agenda.

Ultimately, it is you, the consumers, who own our public power model.



A Great Gift Idea



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Larry's Safety Lesson

Horses gallop and so can power lines

By **Larry Oetken**



Galloping power lines are typically caused when ice and high winds occur at the same time.

Freezing rain creates icicles and odd-shaped ice formations on power lines. The ice buildup changes how wind and air impact the now misshapen, ice-covered line. This change in airflow can cause the power line to start to bounce.

Once the lines get going, they can bounce and buck enough to hit another line, damage themselves enough to cause a power outage or even fall to the ground.

There is not much a power company can do to alleviate galloping lines since the wild motion is caused by Mother Nature. To help prevent this, many power lines have special mechanisms, such as twisted wire or round or angular pieces of metal, attached to the line. While they can help, sometimes they are no match for severe ice and whipping wind.

Aside from ice storms, year-round storms can cause damaging winds, which can knock down power lines and blow trees and limbs onto power lines.

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

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Reaching Markets Through Technology

Nationally Acclaimed Podcaster Comes to Central Nebraska

GROW Nebraska and the Nebraska Tourism Commission have collaborated to bring a nationally renowned expert to Central Nebraska. On February 29, 2024, Troy Sandidge of Chicago is an award-winning podcaster, startup advisor, and founder of 35 brands with over \$175 million in revenue. Troy will be speaking in Nebraska for the first time. Sandidge will demonstrate how to effectively market, grow an audience, enhance engagement, and use technology to increase revenue. This technology and marketing conference for small business owners and entrepreneurs will be hosted at the Younes Center in Kearney, Nebraska.

Troy, also known as the Strategy Hacker®, specializes in developing strategies, processes, and solutions for world-class brands to become more sustainable, scalable, and profitable. He is the author of *Strategize Up*, the founder of Strategy Hackers, and the host of the *iDigress* Podcast, which has over 500,000 downloads and is listed in the top 0.5% of all podcasts. The program is part of the HubSpot program Network and has won numerous honors. He was designated a Top 100 Marketing Business Leader by multiple media sites and is one of the *Los Angeles Wire's* 2020 30 Under 30. Troy has shared stages with Oprah Winfrey, President Barack Obama, Viola Davis, Daymond John, Emma Grede, Russel Brunson, and Gary Vaynerchuk, among others, at over 600 events on five continents. "We are overjoyed to have a conference of this caliber here in Nebraska." "We want Nebraska businesses to be able to reach national and global markets using the amazing technology that we now have, and we want to show

them how," said Janell Anderson Ehrke, CEO of GROW Nebraska.

The networking opportunities are another tremendous bonus, with over 300 Nebraska company owners expected to attend this year. "For me, coming to MarkeTech has been the best thing we've done with GROW Nebraska so far. I learned so much from all of the workshops and networking. And GROW Nebraska has provided numerous resources that have aided our firm. MarkeTech is incredible," said John Marquis of Ogallala Cream Can Supper Company. Four tracks with 20 breakout sessions on social media marketing, Agri Tourism, Business Innovation and Leadership, and E-commerce and Websites will feature learning opportunities on Canva, AI, and using Google to increase online sales, storytelling, and effective digital marketing. In addition, by popular demand, Maria Elena Duran, a leading Google and e-commerce specialist from Houston, Texas, will be featured in three breakout sessions.

Now is the time to register. Members of GROW Nebraska can attend this all-day learning opportunity for only \$89.00. *Nebraska Magazine* readers can save \$40.00 off the regular registration fee or an exhibitor booth using code TICKET24 or BOOTH24. There are also exhibitor booths and sponsorship options available. The GROW Nebraska Foundation sponsors the MarkeTech Conference. More information on the conference may be found at marketechconference.com. Visit grownebraska.org to learn more about GROW Nebraska. If you have any questions, please contact us at info@grownebraska.org or call (308) 338-3520.

Reading about avoiding utility scams makes it sound pretty simple. But the thing about scammers is they take you by surprise. They might be the most charming people you ever met. They might be the meanest and most intimidating, bullying you into acting. It can be hard to say “no” in the moment. One busy businessperson ended up handing over \$1,000 just to get through another one of the day’s fast-paced distractions.

Let’s look at a few common scenarios of utility scams:

- You receive a random call. The caller says you didn’t pay your last electric bill and your power will be cut off immediately—unless you pay right now by credit card over the phone. Caller ID shows it came from the utility; they even told you the exact amount of your most recent bill.
- You receive an alert that you overpaid your utility bill and to get the refund, you need to provide your financial information.
- A friendly couple in uniform knocks on your door saying they’re from the power company and are following up on high-bill complaints from your neighbors. They just need to take a look at your utility bill so they can get the information code to make sure you aren’t being double-charged.

These real-life stories may seem like obvious scams. Who would ever fall for them? It turns out about one in four people.

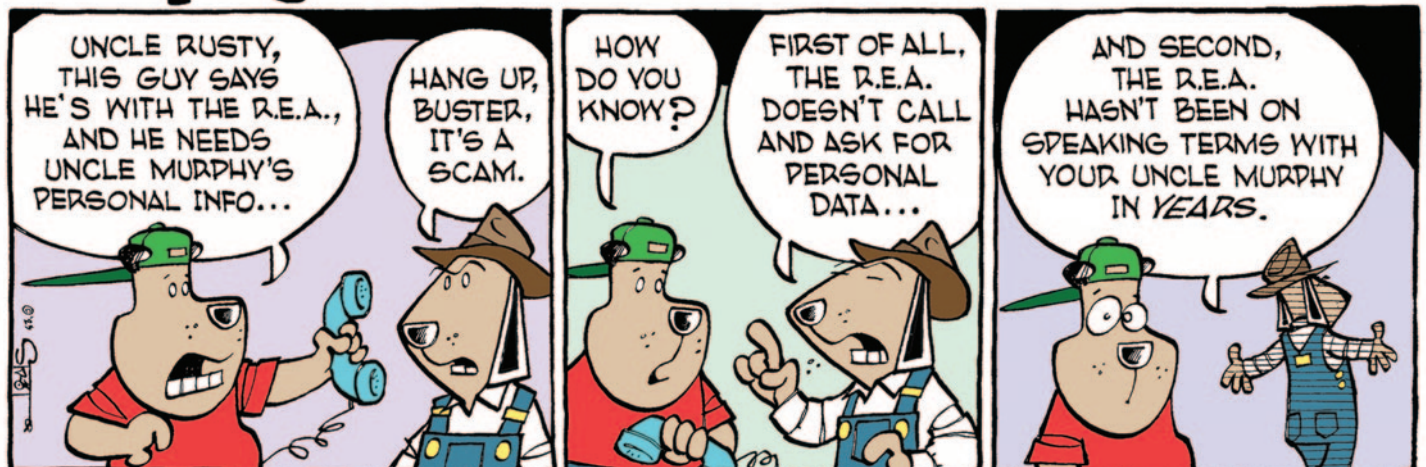
PROTECT YOURSELF FROM UTILITY SCAMS



While most people do the right thing and hang up the phone or contact their utility rather than handing over money or private information, more than \$6 billion in losses to various scams were reported in 2021. According to Utilities United Against Scams, the typical cost for each victim who lost money was about \$500.

Scammers are notorious for recognizing when people are most vulnerable—Christmas, right after a hurricane or tornado, or with the approach of really hot or cold weather. Fraud reports skyrocketed during the Covid-19 pandemic—FTC figures show complaints rising from almost 3.5 million in 2019 to more than 5.5 million in 2021.

Murphy



Southwest Power Pool expanding with seven new members

The Southwest Power Pool (SPP) announced in September that it will soon become the first organization in the U.S. to provide full Regional Transmission Organization (RTO) services in both the Eastern and Western Interconnections of the nation's power grid.

The announcement comes in the wake of Basin Electric Power Cooperative and three regions of the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) deciding to pursue full membership in SPP.

SPP now has commitments from seven western utilities to become full members in the RTO, including the Municipal Energy Agency of Nebraska (MEAN). Along with Basin, WAPA and MEAN, the other utilities include: Colorado Springs Utilities, Deseret Generation and Transmission Cooperative, Platte River Power Authority and Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association. The three regions of WAPA pursuing membership are the Colorado River Storage Project, Rocky Mountain Region and Upper Great Plains-West. The utilities are preparing to join the RTO in early 2026.

The expansion of SPP's service territory is expected to

create economic and reliability benefits for its member companies through access to a larger generation fleet, greater geographic diversity, and increased trading opportunities in SPP's energy markets.

Since October 2020, SPP has been working with parties interested in evaluating the benefits and requirements of RTO membership. This group of western utilities also identified opportunities to leverage a number of benefits from SPP services to achieve renewable energy goals, protect reliability, enable more holistic transmission planning, and participate in a day-ahead wholesale electricity market.

The commitments of these utilities solidifies SPP's long-term strategy for RTO and market expansion to bring increased value to existing and new members, according to SPP. Additionally, this growth will allow SPP and its members to enhance sustainability and reliability in the west, and involves optimizing energy markets across three DC ties, creating new opportunities for energy transfers and increased resilience for both current and future members.

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Colder weather can increase energy use and bills since heating accounts for the highest wintertime energy consumption in most homes. The amount of energy used to heat your home depends on your equipment, how you use it and the efficiency of your home's shell—the building components that separate the indoors from the outdoors.

It's important to know how your home is heated so you can make informed decisions on your energy use. It also helps you prepare for upcoming bills and avoid surprises that impact your budget. A forced-air furnace is the most common type of heating system and is fueled by natural gas, propane, oil or electricity. Heat pumps are growing in popularity and available for forced-air systems. If you have a forced-air system, check the filter regularly and replace when it's dirty. Ductless heat pumps, or mini-splits, boilers, radiant heat, baseboard heaters and electric resistance heaters are other common heating system types.

If you don't know what type of system you have, find the model number of your equipment and look it up online. You'll find information about the kind of system, how efficiently it operates and recommendations for servicing it, which can improve system efficiency.

We use energy to make our homes comfortable. The easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your comfort will allow. The closer your home's temperature is to the outdoor temperature, the less energy is used.

The U.S. Department of Energy recommends a thermostat setting of 68 degrees in the winter while you are awake and lower when you are asleep or away from home. Keep in mind that setting the temperature too low can cause pipes to freeze or moisture issues in some

geographic locations.

Adding an additional layer of clothing, slippers or a hat can keep you comfortable in a cooler home.

Do you use electric resistance space heaters to heat a room or small section of your home? If so, you may see an increase on your electric bill. For example, let's say you use a 1,500-watt electric space heater to warm your living room while you watch TV or read a book.



The easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your comfort will allow. Adding a layer, slippers, a hat or a lap dog can keep you comfortable in a cooler home. Photograph by Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

Operating that space heater for two hours a day at the U.S. average electricity rate of about 16 cents per kilowatt-hour will cost you about \$15 a month. Operating that same space heater for 12 hours a day will cost you about \$90 a month.

If you choose to use space heaters, use them safely. Keep them 3 feet away from anything flammable, do not leave them unattended and plug them directly into the outlet, not an extension cord or power strip.

Just as we put on a windbreaker to keep cold winds from blowing through a sweater, your home also benefits from blocking air movement. Air sealing can make a big improvement in the comfort of your home as well as provide energy savings. A common air sealing practice is applying weatherstripping to exterior doors and windows. You can also seal around plumbing penetrations to help eliminate drafts. A gap often exists between the drywall or wood and the plumbing pipes and drains. Filling these gaps with expanding foam can reduce drafts in bathrooms and kitchens.

Cold, windy winter days are the perfect time to find opportunities for air sealing. Rattling doors or moving curtains can indicate air leakage. Air leakage can occur where two different materials come together, like drywall and trim work. Cracked plaster and gaps in drywall can also cause drafts. Sealing the gaps saves energy and improves comfort.



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Solve Winter Blues with Cozy Recipes

Cozying up with a bowl of warm deliciousness is a perfect way to ward off the chill of winter, and it's made even better when shared with those you love. Turning to favorite chilis and soups with comforting ingredients and smoky spices can transport your family from snow and sleet to warmth and paradise.

Smoky German Potato, Sausage and Bacon Chili offers a reprieve from the cold with hearty flavor and family favorites seasoned with chili powder, cumin and cayenne pepper for classic taste with a twist. The thinly sliced potatoes and bacon of READ German Potato Salad in a sweet-piquant dressing provide a delicious new take on traditional chili.

A bit on the lighter side but equally satisfying, Tuscan 3 Bean Peasant Soup calls for shallots, diced tomatoes, spinach, cannellini beans, cooked small pasta and more for a true winter warmup. Served with toasted bread cubes, it's sure to warm loved ones up from the inside out.

Its key ingredient is Aunt Nellie's 3 Bean Salad, featuring premium green, wax and kidney beans in a light, sweet-tangy vinegar dressing. As a ready-to-eat solution, it can be served chilled, at room temperature or as part of comforting winter recipes.

Visit READSalads.com and AuntNellies.com to find more cozy cold-weather dishes.



Smoky German Potato, Sausage and Bacon Chili

- 4 strips thick bacon, cut into cubes**
- 1 pound smoked sausage, sliced into 1-inch segments**
- 1 small onion, diced**
- 4 cloves garlic, minced**
- 4 tablespoons chili powder**
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander**
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin**
- 1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- 2 Fresno peppers, diced**
- 1 can (14 1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes, drained**
- 1 can READ German Potato Salad, drained**
- 1 cup beef broth**
- salt, to taste**
- pepper, to taste**

In large saucepan over medium heat,

cook bacon until crispy. Remove and set aside, leaving about 2 tablespoons drippings in saucepan.

Add smoked sausage and cook until browned.

Once sausage is cooked, add diced onion and minced garlic, cooking until onion is translucent.

Drain excess fat then stir in chili powder, coriander, cumin, cayenne pepper, oregano and Fresno peppers until well mixed.

Add drained diced tomatoes, German potato salad and cooked bacon to saucepan.

Add beef broth and stir to combine. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

Bring mixture to simmer and let cook about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until flavors are melded.

Substitution: Jalapenos can be used for Fresno peppers.

Tuscan 3 Bean Peasant Soup

- 10 ounces day-old crusty bread, such as ciabatta, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus additional for drizzling (optional)
- 2 medium shallots or 1 small yellow onion, peeled and chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
- 1 can (15 1/2 ounces) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (28 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 3 cans (14 1/2 ounces each) low-sodium chicken broth (about 6 cups)
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup small pasta, such as ditalini, uncooked
- 2 cups frozen cut leaf spinach or chopped fresh spinach
- 2 jars (15 1/2 ounces each) Aunt Nellie's 3 Bean Salad, drained
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest (optional)

Preheat oven to 375 F. Place bread cubes in single layer on large baking pan. Bake until bread cubes are lightly browned, 8-12 minutes. Set aside.

Heat large saucepan or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add 2 tablespoons oil; swirl to coat. Add shallots; cook 5 minutes, or until soft, stirring occasionally. Add garlic; cook 1 minute, or until fragrant. Add cannellini beans, tomatoes, broth and black pepper; bring to boil. Add pasta; cook 8 minutes, or according to package directions. Stir in spinach and bean salad. Simmer 5 minutes, or until heated through.

Ladle soup evenly into bowls. Top with toasted bread cubes and lemon zest, if desired. Drizzle with additional olive oil, if desired.

Goombahs

- 50 caramels
- 1/2 cup evaporated milk
- 3/4 cup butter
- 6 12 oz semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 package German chocolate cake mix
- 1 cup chopped nuts or pecans

Melt caramels with 1/3 cup evaporated milk, set aside. Combine cake mix, butter, evaporated milk and nuts, batter will be stiff. Press 1/2 of the dough in pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 6 minutes. Remove from oven and sprinkle on the chocolate chips, then spread on the caramel mixture. Pat the rest of the dough in pieces over the caramel layer. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 – 18 minutes. Cool before cutting.

Robyn Pawoll, Herman, Nebraska

Chocolate Crackle Cookies

- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts (optional)
- About 1/2 cup powdered sugar

Melt chocolate, combine with brown sugar and oil. Add eggs one at a time, beating well. Add vanilla. Combine flour, baking powder and salt then add to the chocolate mixture. Stir in nuts if using, chilled dough. Drop teaspoons of dough in powdered sugar. Roll into balls to coat. Place on greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for about 10 – 12 minutes. Cool on rack.

Jenny Bergt, Amherst, Nebraska

Ribbon Cookies

- 1 cup butter
- 1 1/2 cups white granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup candied cherries, cut into small pieces
- 1 square unsweetened chocolate, melted
- 1/4 cup finely chopped nuts
- 2 teaspoons poppy seed

Cream butter; add sugar, egg and vanilla, beating after each addition. Stir together flour, baking powder and salt; beat into butter mixture. Divide dough into 3 parts. Add candied cherries to one part, chocolate and nuts to the second, and poppy seed to the third. Layer in that order by patting it into a bread pan. Refrigerate (overnight works best). Cut lengthwise down the pan and then cut into 1/8-inch slices. Bake on ungreased pan at 400 degrees for 10 – 12 minutes.

Ellen Teter, Bartley, Nebraska

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