

# NEBRASKA

Magazine

July 2021

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## Inside:

• Air Boating in Nebraska • Factors to Consider Before Going Solar • From the Ranch to the Boardroom

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**Volume 75  
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Cover photograph by Michael Bazant



Wayne Price

## The Value of Local Control

Did you know that Nebraska is the only state in the union where our electricity is provided entirely from either a publicly-owned utility or a member-owned electric cooperative? This means that 100 percent of the power you use at your home or business is provided by a public power district (PPD) or an electric cooperative.

In 1936, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, sitting beside Nebraska's own Senator George Norris, signed into law the Rural Electrification Act. At that time, only 7 percent of Nebraska's farms had access to electrical service due primarily to the fact that investor-owned utilities (IOUs) saw no profit in bringing electricity to rural areas. The leadership that it took to establish Nebraska's rural electric utilities still exists today. The decisions governing your not-for-profit public power district or electric cooperative are made just as they were more than 75 years ago; by member-owners and locally elected board members.

With local control also comes access for you; where you have a voice on electric related issues that are important to you. In Nebraska, whether your power is delivered by a PPD or electric co-op, you have the right to decide who represents you on your utility's board of directors. If you have a question or concern, as a cooperative member or PPD customer, you have the ability to attend a regularly scheduled board meeting and speak with your utility's decision-makers. No issue is too big or too small. If it's important to you, your local board takes your issue seriously.

Try doing that at an investor-owned utility. As a customer of an IOU, there is no convenient or regular access to the decision-makers of that utility. Unlike Nebraska's public power utilities and cooperatives, investor-owned utilities are driven primarily by profitability for the utility. An IOU board of directors convenes privately and behind closed doors. They are elected by the company's shareholders, not its customers or member-owners. Business decisions are based on what is best for the IOU's bottom line and what will maximize profits and dividends to shareholders, and not necessarily what is best for that utility's customers. In short, investor-owned utilities operate and are governed very differently than how the public power district and electric cooperatives that delivers reliable and affordable electricity to your home and business is governed.

Local control of your public power district or electric cooperative also means that they know you well, have your needs and best interests in mind, and they have deep roots in your community. It is members of your family, or your friends, and most certainly your neighbors that work for and operate your electric utility. NREA's rural electric member-systems deliver service to over 249,000 meters over 87,000 plus miles of distribution lines and employ more than 1,100 individuals across some of our state's most rural areas. Members of your utility's board of directors are customers just like you. They have a stake in every decision that your utility makes and they take a sincere interest in the local economy and welfare of the community they serve.

The bottom line is this: In Nebraska you are an important owner of Nebraska's all-public power utility model and through local control, you have a strong voice on electricity-related issues. The same cannot be said if your power did not come from a public power district or rural electric cooperative.





Dennis Houston

## Celebrate America!

### Celebrate America with Service

The United States and the entire world have been through tough times over the last year and a half. I believe that we will come back stronger than ever. This summer is the time to celebrate our country and our freedom.

The 4th of July brings back many great childhood memories for me like the parade down main street. Dave Houston, my dad, was the Sales Manager at M&S Chevrolet in my hometown. As a small kid, each year I would help dad decorate a brand new Chevy so we could take it in the annual parade. Dad drove and I was in charge of throwing candy out the window to anxious kids along the parade route who were ready to go with their paper grocery bags. Plastic grocery bags did not exist back then. Later in high school, I marched in the parade as a drummer in the high school band.

Great Americans celebrate our great country with service to their country, community or one of many service organizations. They may serve on the county fair board, lead a 4-H group or serve on the local school board or library board.

Many of your neighbors down the road give decades of service to your local electric co-op or public power district as directors on the board of directors. These men and women give many hours of their time and talent each month to lead the local rural electric system. Thirty-four of them serve as State Directors on the Nebraska Rural Electric Association statewide Board of Directors. Several others serve on countless committees to make our rural electric system the best it can be. Take a moment and thank them for their service the next time you see them.

Young men and women choose to serve our country as a member of our military. Sheryl and I are both proud parents of two United States Marines – Corporal Jack Houston and Lance Corporal Ryan Houston. Jack is a machine gunner currently going through Marine sniper qualification school. Ryan is in Marine Intelligence. I'd like to thank all of the fine men and women and their military families who serve our country. Remember, it's the land of the free because of the brave.

This year on the 4th of July, the Houston clan will be gathered at my sister Trish's house on Main Street in Dunlap, Iowa to celebrate America and take in the parade as it marches by her big front porch. And yes, you may even find me at the curb trying to catch a piece of candy.

God bless America and may he protect our troops!



# Air Boating in Nebraska



Air boating on Nebraska rivers is a passion for many boaters, including Derick Engelbart of West Point, Neb. He is part of an informal group of air boaters that enjoy navigating the Elkhorn River.

“We have a great cross section of people,” he said, “young, mid-aged and elder navigating the Elkhorn River waters with airboats. Air boaters in our region believe the Elkhorn River is the best river in the state of Nebraska to operate an airboat on.”

Although similar to the Platte River, Engelbart feels the Elkhorn River provides more of an “up close and personal connection with wildlife.” Likely sightings of wildlife from an airboat include; bald eagles, sand turtles, whitetail deer and muskrat.

*Photographs courtesy of Derick Engelbart*



“You are consumed with nature’s greatest offerings and there is a sense of freedom away from all of life’s distractions,” he said.

Engelbart has owned three different airboats over the past 14 years. They have increased in size as his family grew. He enjoys spending time with his family fishing, swimming, cruising and making sand castles on their airboat excursions.

“I enjoy spending time with my family as it is time you will never get back,” he said. “We also enjoy taking ‘newbie’s’ out on the river. Some of the facial expressions and responses we get are ‘I had no idea I could have this much fun five minutes from home!’ and ‘when can I go again?’”

Not considered to be part of any one group, Engelbart said everyone is a friend on the river. Sometimes there are a few folks out fishing and other times there are numerous amounts of air boaters enjoying the hot sunshine and peaceful river views.

“We do have a group called Cuming County Young Professionals (CCYP) that get together on the river,” he said. “The purpose is to get people together and network so when projects come up in the community, we already have that bond of working together to get it done.”

Often time’s air boaters are out picking up trash or other pollutants that others have left behind, he said. “We want to pass on this way of conserving our river system to our children.”

One important part of being able to enjoy these wildlife sightings from the seat of an airboat is an association called Nebraska Airboaters Association (NAA). Established in 1995, The NAA’s primary goal is to unite to preserve air boating rights by working closely with the public and state agencies. NAA has a strong partnership with Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, where each year NAA is giving donations back to the youth in Nebraska communities. The Nebraska Airboaters Association is the largest air boating group in the Midwest.



## Clean, Drain and Dry to stop invasive species

While many Nebraska boaters are eager to enjoy a summer day on the lake, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission urges them to be wary of a nasty hitchhiker: the zebra mussel.



Zebra mussels can live up to two weeks out of water and young zebra mussels – or veligers – are invisible to the naked eye and can be spread through any water left undrained. Boaters should clean all visible plants, mud, or animals, drain all water within the boat, including the motor, and dry their boat for five days before going to another water body.

Game and Parks regulations require anglers, hunters and boaters conduct clean, drain and dry procedures before leaving a water body; they also are not allowed to arrive at a new one with any water from another water body.



A man wearing a grey baseball cap, glasses, a dark green and purple striped long-sleeved shirt, and blue jeans stands in the aisle of a large wooden barn. The barn has a high ceiling with exposed wooden beams and rafters. The floor is covered with straw. The man has his hands in his pockets and is looking directly at the camera.

# From the Ranch to the Boardroom

Bryan Monahan knows a thing or two about ranching and cattle. The Monahan Cattle Company, located near Hyannis, Neb., covers around 130,000 acres and supports 4,000 cows and calves.

He also knows a thing or two about public power in Nebraska. Monahan has served on the board of Panhandle Rural Electric Membership Corporation (PREMA), headquartered in Alliance, Neb., since 1989. He has held the position of secretary/treasurer ever since May of 1999.

He is also currently serving as the president of the Nebraska Rural Electric Association (NREA) Board of Directors. He has served as secretary/treasurer and vice president of the NREA board, representing Region III.

“My first term got cut short,” he said, “because the vice president passed away when I was secretary/treasurer. I had only given one or two treasurer reports.”

Monahan enjoys serving on the board, where he has met a lot of great people and has been able to travel.

Monahan graduated from Curtis Technical School with a degree in Production Agriculture. He operates the ranch with his parents, James and Hil, and his brother, Bob.

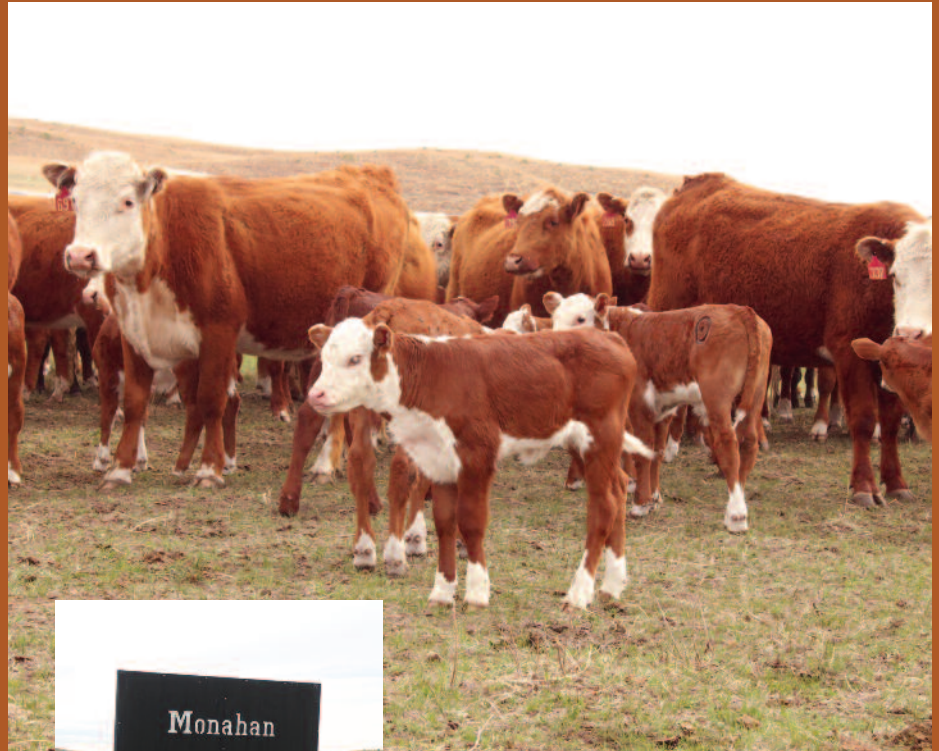


His wife, LaRene, works at a nursing home in Mission, South Dakota. They have three children.

His oldest daughter, Shantel, is married to Travis Lurz, a lineman at PREMA. Travis has worked at PREMA since 2007 and Shantel is a registered nurse at the hospital in Alliance.

His son, JT, works on the ranch and his daughter, Sarah is currently a nursing school student at UNMC Scottsbluff.

The original 160-acre homestead was purchased in 1893 by Bryan's great-grandfather, J.H. Monahan. Today the ranch is 33 miles long and varies from four to 11 miles wide. They raise primarily commercial cattle but maintain registered Herefords of Line 1 breeding to produce bulls for use on the commercial herd.



*The Circle Dot brand used by the Monahan Cattle Company was acquired by Bryan's grandfather, who saw it at a ranch in Texas. Photographs by Wayne Price*



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# 60 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.

Governor Frank Morrison calls attention to a bust of the late Senator George Norris on the cover. The bust was presented to the State of Nebraska by the Norris family to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Nebraska lawmaker. An article about Norris was featured in this issue as well.

The July 1961 issue also featured an article about Nebraska's Unlimited Recreation opportunities.



**CONTEST WINNER** Gail Fuller of Sargent accepts the new electric sewing machine she won in the "How Many Feathers on the Robin?" contest which appeared in the March Nebraska **ELECTRIC FARMER**. Presenting the first prize is Wesley Johnston, (left), manager of Statewide Sewing Stores at North Platte, sponsor of the contest. Proudly looking on are Gail's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Marion Fuller.



## Proposed National Shrine

The Norris family home (above) may become a national shrine. Rep. Phil Weaver, from Nebraska's First District, has introduced a bill in the House of Representatives authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to acquire the Norris home and establish a Senator George W. Norris National Memorial.

The home is on Norris Avenue in McCook, about two blocks north of the business district. Both the street and Norris Park, across from the home, were named for the senator after his death.

Mrs. Norris explains that the

12-room home has three bedrooms upstairs, each with its own private bathroom because the late senator wanted it that way. In his younger years, he had never lived in a home with a private bath and he determined that his McCook home would have plenty of bathrooms.

Memories of the late senator are valuable to Mrs. Norris and she has kept the home just as it was when he lived there. His favorite rocking chair, roll-top desk and tobacco jar are preserved along with many other personal belongings.

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## Use Caution with Fourth of July Fireworks

By Larry Oetken



What would the Fourth of July be without cookouts, baseball games, and pyrotechnic displays in the night sky? But

it's easy to forget that fireworks are dangerous explosives, and carelessness could have deadly consequences.

Every year, thousands of people are injured by fireworks, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

To help make sure your holiday celebrations don't end with a trip to the emergency room, follow these safety tips from the CPSC:

- Sparklers aren't safe for small children. They burn at very high temperatures—up to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, hot enough to melt some metals—and can easily set clothes on fire.
- Ignite fireworks in a clearing,

away from power lines, homes, other structures, dry leaves and grass, and other flammable materials. Never light them in any type of container.

• Keep a bucket of water handy in case of emergencies and for fireworks that fail to ignite or explode.

• Check instructions for storage, but generally keep fireworks in a cool, dry place.

• Do not place any part of your body directly over fireworks while you're lighting them, and immediately move away as soon as the device is lit.

• "Homemade" fireworks kits are illegal. Never try to make your own.

• After fireworks have completely burned out, soak them with a hose before throwing them in the trash to help prevent fires.

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

### LOVE THE OUTDOORS? BE SAFE OUT THERE

**2/3** of lightning fatalities are associated with outdoor recreational activities.

Pay attention to weather forecasts **before you go canoeing or boating**. Get off the open water as soon as you **hear thunder**.

**Do not use generators in enclosed areas.** The same goes for grills, camping stoves or other small appliances that produce carbon monoxide.

**Look up** for power lines while fishing or sailing.  
**FACT: Fishing is the most common outdoor activity associated with lightning-related deaths.**

**Going for a hike?** If you hear thunder or see lightning, **do not seek shelter under a tree.**

**Tent camping?** Plan ahead, seek shelter in a hard-top vehicle or four-sided building during a storm or at the first sight of lightning.

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Our 66th year

by Maria Kanevsky

## Factors to Consider Before Going Solar

You can see them on fields of open land, on top of people's homes and even on backpacks. Solar panels are becoming much cheaper and more prevalent in the United States and across the world. Because of this, more homeowners are considering installing solar panels on their own rooftops. Whether you're interested in saving money or helping the environment, there are many benefits from installing rooftop solar panels. However, there are several things to think about before making the jump. Here are two key factors to consider before installing solar panels on your own home:

### Location.

Does the town or state you live in typically get a lot of sunlight? Is your location prone to natural disasters? The best areas for rooftop solar panels are those that generally receive a lot of sunlight throughout the year and are less likely to have natural disasters that could damage solar equipment. Even if you don't live in the sunniest state, this doesn't mean solar panels won't work for you. While lesser-lit areas may not be as efficient, they will still receive a substantive amount of solar energy. Areas that are prone to natural disasters can also take advantage of unique ways to prevent damage, for example, different mounting procedures to protect against hurricanes.

Additionally, depending on your location, many states also have incentives and rebates for installing residential solar panel systems, on top of the federal solar tax credit of 26% in 2020, which is available to all states. Being aware of state-specific incentives can help you make your decision before installing a residential solar panel system.

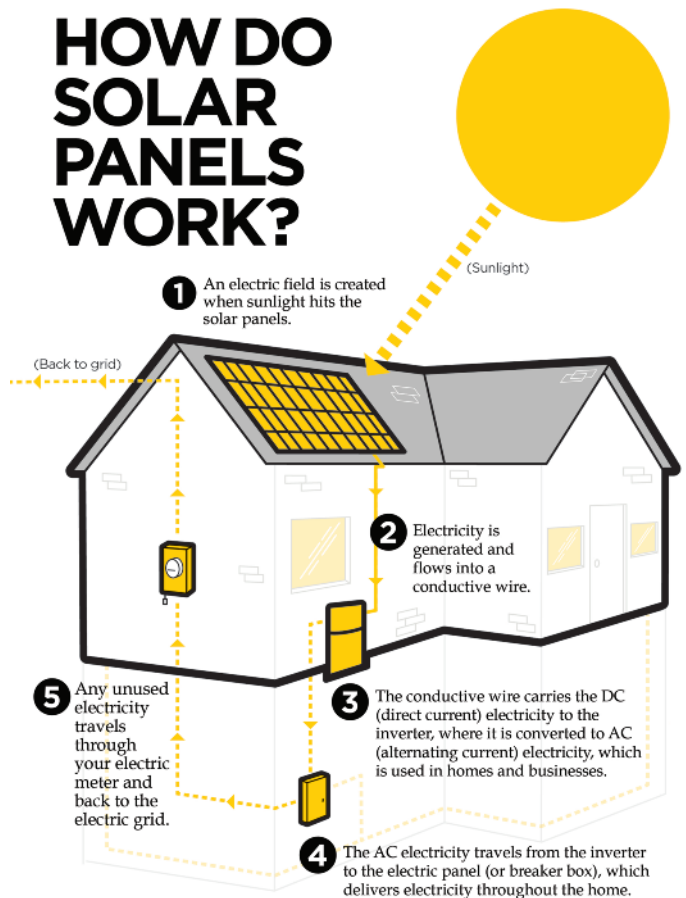
### Roof Condition.

Two huge factors of solar panel efficiency are the direction your roof slant faces and the angle of the slant. South-facing roofs will receive the most sunlight throughout the day, and roof angles between 30 and 45 degrees work well in most cases. However, even if your home does not have a south-facing roof, you can still have an economically-viable solar panel system.

The material of your roof is also crucial since some roof types are better situated to have solar panels than others, such as composite roofing or tile roofs. Despite this, solar panels can be installed on practically any type of roof material, although more complicated roof materials, like tar and gravel roofs, may be more expensive and require additional expertise.

Lastly, ensuring the good condition of your roof plays a large part to help make sure that your panels are situated as safely as possible.

These two considerations provide a great starting point for learning how to go solar, but it should be noted this list is not complete. There are additional important details to consider, such as financing, solar panel type, potential battery installation and how long you plan to live at your current home.





# Do Some Research Before Buying Solar Energy

Solar energy is booming, and the future is brighter than ever. Through the use of rooftop solar panels, many homeowners and ag producers can now harness the sun's natural rays to produce their own electricity that's environmentally friendly and cost effective.

But with the increasing popularity of solar, unfortunately, some businesses are taking advantage of consumers who are interested in generating their own energy through solar panels.

While many solar companies are genuine and truly want to help consumers with a successful solar project, there are the occasional bad apples. You've likely heard a story or two about solar vendors who promised rooftop panels would generate enough electricity to power your entire home, or offer a quick return on your investment.

If you're interested in solar panels for your home or ag operation, consider these tips before installation:

- Talk to an energy advisor at your local rural electric utility first. We want you to feel confident about any decisions you make about your home energy use, especially decisions about generating energy at home.

- Collect at least three quotes from different solar companies to ensure you're getting a competitive deal. As with any major purchase, research is key, so read customer reviews for each of the three solar vendors.

- If you speak to a solar vendor and they use high-pressure tactics, like an offer that's only good for 24 hours, run! Any reputable solar company will recognize that you need time to review a proposal and thoroughly weigh your decision.

- You know if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. So, if a solar company is making promises that sound unachievable and outlandish, they probably are. Remember, if you have any questions, you can always count on your local rural electric utility for advice.

- Finally, when it's time to review and sign a solar contract, make sure the language is clear and easy to understand. Ensure any prior verbal (or emailed) promises are also included in the contract.

Going solar is a major decision, so you'll want to conduct a good bit of research first.

## You've all seen the ads...

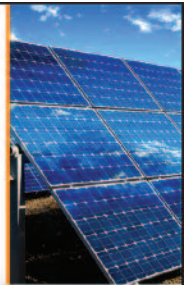
While many solar companies are genuine and truly want to help consumers with a successful solar installation, occasional vendors provide misleading information to make a sale or don't follow local building or electrical codes, putting you at risk.

**Contact your local public power utility.** They can provide an assessment on the proper project size, estimated costs and return on investment, best practices for installation, and how to select a reliable solar developer.

**Thinking about solar?**  
Give your local public power utility a call.

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Nebraska Public Power District  
Always there when you need us.

Together with your local public power utility.



As you find yourself spending more time outdoors this summer, remember to exercise caution near electrical equipment maintained by your local public power district or electric cooperative.

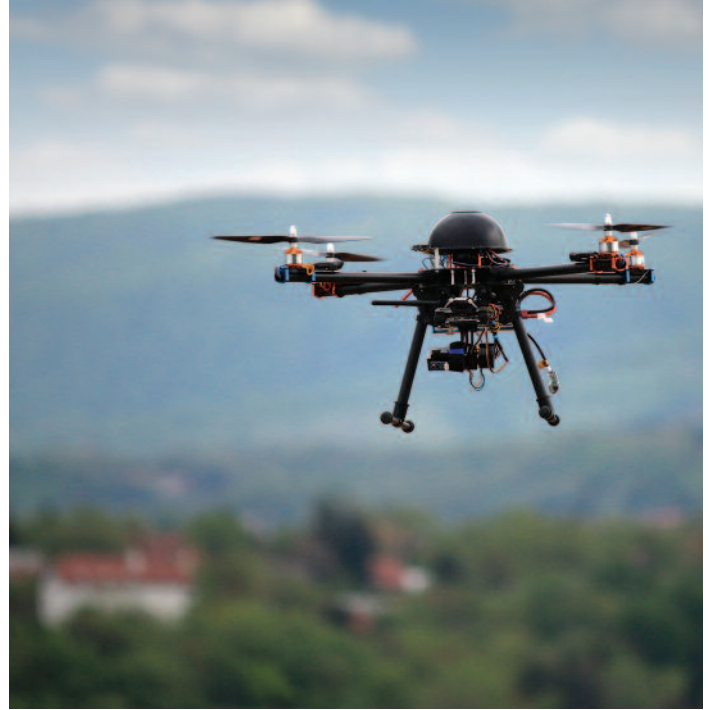
Substations and power lines carry extremely high voltages, and if contact is accidentally made, the results can be dangerous—or even deadly.

Never climb trees near power lines. If you make contact with a tree that is touching a power line, your body could become the path of electricity from the line to the ground. If you encounter an animal trapped in a tree near power lines or inside a substation, do not attempt to remove it—no matter how furry and cute! Call your local electric utility or 911 for assistance.

These days, we are seeing more remote-controlled toys, like drones and airplanes, which can be a great way to have fun outdoors. But these gadgets also bring new safety concerns. Remote-controlled toys should never be flown near power lines, substations or other electrical equipment.

Remember these safety tips when flying a remote-controlled toy:

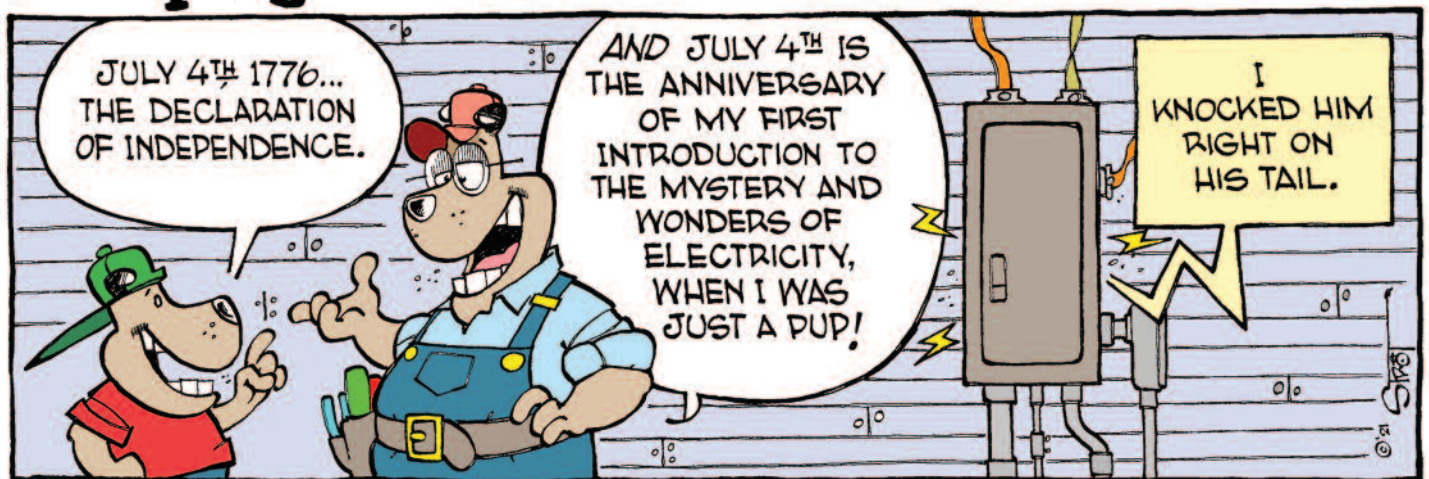
- Keep a safe distance from electrical equipment when you fly. If contact is accidentally made with a power line or a transformer inside a substation, many members of your community could be left without electricity.
- Keep the remote-controlled toy in sight at all times.



*Drones have sharp, fast-spinning propellers that can hurt someone or damage property. Please practice consciousness and use your common sense in choosing where, when and how to fly.*

- Avoid flying if weather conditions are unfavorable. High winds could cause you to lose control of the remote-controlled toy.

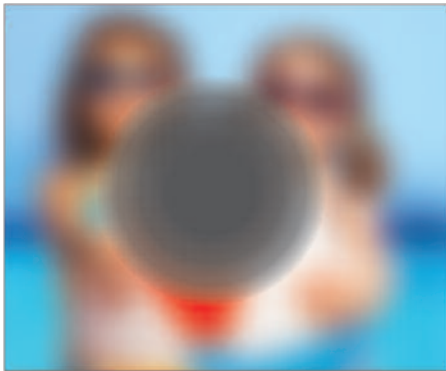
## Murphy





# Advanced Technology Allows Macular Degeneration Patients To See Again

*And Allows Many Low Vision Patients To Drive Again*



*A scene as it might be viewed by a person with age-related macular degeneration*



*Same scene of Grandchildren as viewed through telescope glasses.*

For many patients with macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions, the loss of central visual detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence - driving. Nebraska optometrist, Dr. Robert Stamm is using miniaturized telescopes which are mounted in glasses to help people who have lost vision from macular degeneration and other eye conditions.

“Some of my patients consider me their last chance or people who have vision loss” said Dr. Stamm, one of only a few doctors in the world who specializes in fitting bioptic

telescopes to help those who have lost vision due to macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and other eye diseases.

Imagine a pair of glasses that can improve your vision enough to change your life. Bioptic telescopes may be the breakthrough in optical technology that will give you back your independence. Patients with vision in the 20/200 range can many times be improved to 20/50.

Bioptic telescopes treat both dry and wet forms of macular degeneration as well as other vision limiting conditions.

While there is currently no cure, promising research is being done on many fronts. “My job is to figure out everything and anything possible to keep a person functioning” says Dr. Stamm “Even if it’s driving”. “The major benefit of the bioptic telescope is that the lens automatically focuses on whatever you’re looking at,” said Dr. Stamm. “It’s like a self-focusing camera, but much more precise.”

For more information and to schedule an appointment today, call:

**Robert Stamm, O.D.**  
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## With the Legislative Session Over, There is Still Work To Do

The Legislature has adjourned and after all the distractions that COVID brought to this year's session and our lives, senators still managed to pass more than 200 bills and adjourn a few days early. Some bills were passed with the emergency clause attached which means they became law as soon as the governor signed them, but most pieces of legislation will become law 90 days after the end of session.

The Nebraska Rural Electric Association had a successful session. We were able to advocate for expanded rural broadband, promote broader eligibility for the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, and promote a process which allows our boards to properly utilize videoconferencing technology for their board meetings. We were also able to successfully protect public power from a number of measures that jeopardized the makeups of our rural boards, diminished the local control of our member-systems, and threatened to increase electric rates.

Despite the end of the Legislative session, the NREA government relations department will not take a break from advocating for the issues that impact rural electric utilities. Senators have introduced dozens of interim legislative resolutions that call for studies or hearings on issues that are important to our industry. Interim studies are an opportunity for a senator to hold hearings or conduct a study on an issue that they want to learn more about. Often these investigative studies become an idea that ultimately is introduced as legislation.

Legislative resolutions have been introduced to look at broadband speeds across the state, to look at rural economic development, to better understand the regulation and taxation of electric vehicles...and on many more important topics. As these resolutions are scheduled for hearings, the NREA will be monitoring these measures, attending the hearings, and testifying as necessary.



In addition, it is important to note that the Unicameral Legislature runs in two-year cycles. Unless a bill was indefinitely postponed by the committee of jurisdiction or passed into law, the legislation that was introduced in this year's session is still available for passage next year. This means the NREA will continue to monitor this legislation and meet with senators

throughout the summer to see if we can have a positive impact on the proposed legislation before session begins next year.

Finally, as if 2021 has not been unique enough, the Speaker of the Legislature plans to call all the senators back in September to hold a special session that will likely last a few weeks. The special session is needed to redraw electoral district boundaries as a result of the 2020 census. Congressional districts, legislative districts, and smaller political subdivision districts will all have to be rebalanced. The state is still waiting on the final numbers

from the U.S. Census Bureau. Once Nebraska receives those numbers, the Legislature will be able to meet and draw new maps. A special legislative redistricting committee has been formed to make the first attempt at redrawing the district boundaries, but once they finish with their proposal, the full Legislature will ultimately have to vote for passage of the final maps.

Once the congressional and legislative district boundaries have been determined, it will be the state's political subdivisions (like public power districts) time to update their district boundaries. All of this needs to be completed by the end of the year to give prospective candidates and the Secretary of State adequate time to run for election and ensure every voting Nebraskan obtains the proper voting ballot at the May primary elections. There is no doubt this is a monumental task.



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**Q** : We just purchased a home and noticed the previous owner installed an electric wall heater in the outdoor shed. How much will our electric bill go up if we use this heater next winter? Should we consider insulating the shed at some point?

**A** Good questions! An uninsulated outbuilding can be quite expensive to heat (or cool) depending on where you live. Even though we're currently experiencing July's warmer temperatures, I'll focus on heating since your shed includes the wall heater.

Years ago, I worked on a home energy contest that selected homes with the highest energy bills and helped the owners make efficiency improvements. One year, the home with the highest energy use had an uninsulated shed that was heated in order to keep several cans of leftover paint from freezing. The cost of heating the shed each winter was more than it would have cost to replace the paint.

The cost to heat or cool your outdoor shed depends on your climate, the size of the outbuilding and the price you pay for electricity. I conducted a quick calculation that showed heating an uninsulated 6 ft. by 8 ft. shed could cost twice as much as heating an insulated 900 sq. ft. home. Wow!

Some outbuildings are heated with wood, which is a sound choice if you have a free source of firewood. Another strategy often seen in workshops is a radiant heater directed at the work area, perhaps in front of a workbench. But if you're paying for your fuel and decide to keep an outbuilding heated, you should definitely insulate it.

An important consideration, unless you live in a desert-dry climate, is the effect moisture can have in an outbuilding. Moisture enables rot, insects and mold to wreak havoc on your structure, and rust to degrade tools and other metals. Heating and insulating an outbuilding, if done right, can reduce or eliminate a moisture problem. But insulation installed incorrectly can trap moisture and foster mold growth.

Moisture in an outbuilding is usually caused by three things: leaks where water can get through (typically



*Keeping a newer shed in top condition may require insulation and proper venting. Photograph by Dave F3138, Flickr User*

through the roof, windows and doorway); seepage through floors and walls; or condensation when nighttime temperatures drop. To prevent moisture buildup, you need to eliminate moisture sources and prevent condensation.

As air cools, it cannot carry as much moisture, and condensation occurs, usually on the coolest object at hand. Insulating walls and ceilings can keep the interior wall or ceiling surface from getting cold enough for condensation to occur. Insulated wall or ceiling cavities need to be carefully air sealed so that condensation does not occur inside the cavity.

I should also note that the cost of heating and cooling an outbuilding can be much lower if the thermostat is carefully controlled.

Only you can decide if the value of heating and cooling your outbuilding is worth the cost and effort to properly insulate and seal. Even if your shed is not heated or insulated, it's worth keeping an eye out for mold and mildew.

We hope you enjoy your new home and your outdoor shed!

# Extend the life of your water heater with six simple checks

The average life of a water heater is 13 years. Some may only last two or three years, others 20. What's the trick to make them last?

You can extend your water heater's life by knowing what makes it fail and performing a few simple checks and maintenance duties. The number one water heater killer is rust. There are several factors that speed up the rusting and corrosion process.

**Anode rods wear out:** Every water heater has an anode rod inside that electrochemically corrodes so the tank won't. Once it is spent, the exposed metal parts of the tank are under attack.

*Solution:* Check the rod every year and replace it if necessary.

**Sediment build up:** When cold water is heated, it forces minerals out of solution and forms solids, usually calcium carbonate. Those solids settle to the bottom of the tank between the heating unit and the water. In addition to slowing heat transfer, the build-up causes overheating that can destroy glass lining and weaken the steel bottom. Sediment can also become a host for harmful bacteria, create odor problems and become noisy.

*Solution:* Drain your water heater annually. If the sediment is excessive, contact a plumber to have it thoroughly cleaned.

**Rust and corrosion on the tank:** Leaks can cause water heaters to rust from the outside preventing drains and pressure valves from operating properly.

*Solution:* Check all plumbing connections for leaks and repair or replace as necessary.

**Corrosive gases:** If the air surrounding your water heater contains salt, chlorine, or other corrosive chemicals, they attack the combustion chamber and/or flue.

*Solution:* Do not store corrosive chemicals near the unit.

**Too hot temperature setting:** The higher the temperature, the faster sediment accumulates. Every 20 degree rise in water temperature doubles the chemical action that causes rust and corrosion.

*Solution:* Keep water temperature as low as possible. Normal tap water temperature is 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Soft water:** Water is softened by exchanging salt for the hard minerals normally present in water. Salt can triple the amount of calcium carbonate and drastically shorten the life of the unit's anode rod.

*Solution:* Check the anode rod frequently when necessary.



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# Summer Snacks that Satisfy Cravings

Road trips, outdoor adventures and relaxing by the pool are some of summer's most popular activities, and all can be more enjoyable by adding favorite snacks to the mix. Next time you bask in the summer sun, bring along some tasty pecan snacks that allow you stay on track with wellness goals without sacrificing those snack-time delights.

Whether you enjoy their natural sweetness straight from the bag or add them to your go-to recipes, pecans are among the lowest in carbs and highest in fiber of tree nuts, an option that's perfect for snacking. In fact, each ounce of pecans includes 3 grams of plant-based protein and 3 grams of fiber to go with 12 grams of "good" monounsaturated fat and only 2 grams of saturated fat.

Visit [AmericanPecan.com](http://AmericanPecan.com) for more snacking tips and recipes.

This summer, when heading to an event like a family reunion, picnic or just a day at home, try making this Oh-So-Berry Cobbler.

It's served warm and is a perfect sweet treat when berries are at their freshest. Full of summer goodness, it's a treat for everyone to enjoy with strawberries, blackberries, blueberries and a splash of lemon juice served with ice cream.

Find more summer recipes at [Culinary.net](http://Culinary.net).



## Mini Pecan Lemon Berry Tarts

### Mini Pecan Crusts:

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 2 cups pecan pieces
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons sugar

### Lemon Filling:

- 1/2 cup lemon curd
- 1/2 cup blueberries, raspberries or combination
- powdered sugar, for dusting (optional)

To make mini pecan crusts: Preheat oven to 350 F. Line mini muffin tin with paper liners or spray with nonstick cooking spray.

In food processor, blend pecan

pieces, butter and sugar until mixture forms coarse dough.

Scoop about 2 teaspoons pecan mixture in each muffin tin. Use back of wooden spoon or fingers to press mixture evenly along bottom and up sides of each muffin cup.

Bake 12 minutes, or until crusts are golden brown. Allow crusts to cool completely before removing from pan.

To assemble crusts: Spoon 1 teaspoon lemon curd into each mini pecan crust. Top with one raspberry or three small blueberries. Dust with powdered sugar, if desired.



### Oh-So-Berry Cobbler

- 2 cups strawberries, sliced
- 2 cups blackberries
- 2 cups blueberries
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- nonstick cooking spray
- ice cream

Heat oven to 350 F.

In large bowl, mix strawberries, blackberries and blueberries then add lemon juice and cornstarch; mix to combine. Refrigerate 20 minutes.

In medium bowl, whisk flour, baking powder and salt. Set aside.

In bowl of stand mixer, beat butter, brown sugar and vanilla extract on medium speed until blended. Gradually add flour mixture until crumbles form.

Spray 9-by-13-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.

Pour berries into bottom of dish. Top berries with crumbles.

Bake 30-40 minutes, or until lightly browned.

Serve with ice cream.

### Grilled Chicken Salsa

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 medium tomato seeded and chopped to make 1/2 cup
- 1/2 small cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped to make 1/4 cup
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped cilantro
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Heat grill to medium heat. While grill heats, toss together tomato, cucumber, onion cilantro, lime juice and salt. Refrigerate 30 minutes. Brush chicken with oil and grill until no longer pink, about 7 – 8 minutes per side. Drain salsa if necessary and serve over chicken.

*Darlus McWilliams, Norfolk, Nebraska*

### Cauliflower Broccoli Salad

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 3 cups fresh Cauliflower                  | 1/3 cup raisins (optional)                   |
| 3 cups fresh Broccoli                     | 1/3 cup chopped walnuts or pecans (optional) |
| 1/2 medium chopped onion                  |  |
| 1 cup mild grated cheddar cheese          | <b>Dressing:</b>                             |
| 1/2 pkg. (8 oz.) cooked and chopped bacon | 1 cup mayonnaise or Miracle Whip             |
| 1/4 cup sunflower seeds (optional)        | 1/3 cup granulated sugar                     |
|   | 1/4 cup white vinegar                        |

Cook bacon, set aside to cool. Chop. Cut vegetables into small florets. In large bowl, mix vegetables, onion, bacon, cheese and any desired seeds, nuts, etc. Add dressing and combine well. Chill and enjoy.

*Diane O'Donnell, Cozad, Nebraska*

### Corn Fritters

- 3 cups raw corn
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Pinch of pepper
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup milk

Drop by tablespoons, fry in 1 inch of oil at 375 degrees for 3 minutes.

*Glady Prokop, Pender, Nebraska*



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