

# THE WIRE

CURRENT NEWS FROM THE ELKHORN RURAL PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

April 2011

Serving the Elkhorn River Valley since 1940

Volume 20, Number 4

## NOTICE: ALL CUSTOMERS

Effective May 1, 2011, bills will be mailed the first week of each month and the payment due dates will be the 15th of each month for all customers that currently have payments due on the 18th of each month and the 25th of each month.

## Automatic Meter Reading For Rural Customers To Start In April

**ATTENTION: Starting April 1, you will no longer be required to read your meter and submit the reading to our office!** All of the new automatic meters have been installed, so ERPPD personnel can read your meter from the office. Therefore, we are taking on the responsibility for the monthly meter readings. The only customers who will still be required to read their own meters are pasture pump services, which will remain customer read once per year in December.

On April 30, ERPPD personnel will use the automatic meter reading system to read all the meters and then calculate and generate a bill for the usage period from the March reading date through April 30. This could be approximately a 6-week usage period, depending on the day you read your meter in March, as opposed to the normal 4-week usage period. **PAYMENT FOR THIS BILL WILL BE DUE ON MAY 15.**

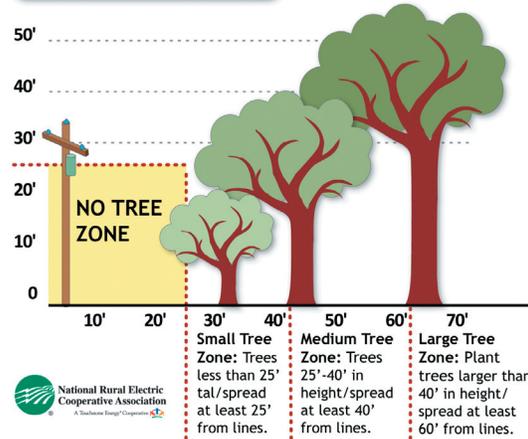
May was chosen as the transition month because, on the average, April is usually a lower usage month. After May 1, all usage periods will be on a monthly cycle.

## Email Addresses and Cell Phone Numbers Needed

In an attempt to provide you with better customer service through better communication, we are requesting that you provide us with your email address and your home phone number (land line or cell phone). In the future, your email address can allow us to keep you informed about projects in your area, planned outage information, etc. It will also allow you to log in to our online bill payment screens for easy and convenient bill payment. Rest assured that we will not share your contact information with any other companies.

## Right Tree--Right Place

### Tree Planting Guide



If you are landscaping your backyard, preplanning is the best insurance for your future tree and shrub planting effort. Ensure the oak or maple tree you planted for future generations does not have

to be removed by utility tree trimming crews before its benefits are realized. Careful placement of trees and taller shrubs is necessary to avoid interference with overhead and underground electric utility lines.

Arbor Day on April 29 is a perfect time to teach the younger generation the benefits of tree planting, selection of the proper species for your location, and how to correctly plant a tree and foster its growth. However, one element of the lesson should be to teach youngsters that trees can interfere with overhead electric lines and safety can be compromised when limbs contact the wires. The same lesson can be taught about roots which may be cut, if buried electric lines have to be repaired or replaced.

Trees conduct electricity and can create a safety hazard if limbs grow too close to electric lines. Power outages or momentary interruptions can occur when trees and branches come into contact with overhead lines.

Another concern is the safety risk when children climb trees near power lines. Accidental contact of electric wires with a tree limb or person playing or trimming around the tree could be fatal. Also, trees growing near power lines must be pruned to maintain a safe distance from the wires. This results in increased right-of-way maintenance costs and ultimately rate increases. If you have trees that appear to be growing into power lines, contact us at 1-800-675-2185. Never try to prune them yourself.

To learn more about which trees might work best in your yard, visit [www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org), or call ERPPD at 1-800-675-2185.



## ONGOING MAINTENANCE

### S&L To Test Poles

As part of ERPPD's continued commitment to provide the most reliable service possible, S&L Pole Testing, Inc., will inspect about 3,200 distribution poles, many of which were last inspected in 1996 and 1997. The process should begin sometime in June.

ERPPD began testing poles in the mid-1970s and completed the first inspection of the district's 2,500 miles of line in 1995. The program helps find weak links in the distribution system which, after completing any needed maintenance work, has resulted in fewer outages because of faulty poles. ERPPD's present goal is to test enough poles each year to cover the entire district every 15 years.

This year, contractors will be testing poles in the following areas: west and northwest of Elgin up to north of

Clearwater, south and southwest of Battle Creek, and east and south of Norfolk.

Testing occurs as follows:

1. Check pole's age; test any older than 15 years.
2. Dig down about 18 inches all around the pole.
3. Pole is "sounded" with a hammer.
4. Pole is drilled in four spots to check the core.
5. Pole is treated at ground level and holes are filled with treatment rod.
6. Each pole is passed/rejected and its condition recorded.
7. A work order is made for ERPPD crews to replace rejected poles.

Call 1-800-675-2185 if you have questions about either operation.

## We're looking for a few outstanding teens!

Elkhorn RPPD would like to send up to six teens as representatives to the Nebraska Rural Electric Association's Youth Energy Camp.

Let us know about a teen in your life who:

- Is currently a high school freshman, sophomore, or junior
- Lives in a home served by Elkhorn RPPD
- Is hard working
- Has a positive attitude
- Wants to improve their leadership skills
- Would like to learn more about utility careers
- Would like an opportunity to represent ERPPD on a trip to Washington, D.C.

Check out the Energy Camp details on page 3 of the March issue and complete the application form by May 1.

Application forms are also available in our office and from the guidance counselor of your high school.

If you have any questions, call our office at 1-800-675-2185 and ask for Stacie.

## SAFETY NEWS

### Accidents Underscore Importance of Farm Safety



Two recent farm-related electrocutions highlight the importance of safety and safety education when working in a farm setting.

On March 3, 2011, two southern Illinois teenage males were electrocuted when they attempted to free a raccoon from a 31' aluminum irrigation pipe on a farm south of St. Louis. They stood the pipe up on end to let the raccoon slide down and out of the pipe. The pipe made contact with an overhead power line, killing the two teens instantly.

In the summer of 2010, an Illinois farmer was electrocuted when the boom of his Terragator crop sprayer made contact with an overhead power line. There were no witnesses, but the family speculated that he did not know the boom was in contact with the high voltage until he stepped down and became

a direct path to the ground for the electricity. He was severely burned from the waist down and died several months later from complications due to the severe burns.

Please be careful, we like having you as our customer, and we certainly don't want anything bad to happen to you. For more information on these and other electrical accidents, check out the SafeElectricity link on our website, [www.erppd.com](http://www.erppd.com).



# DIGGERS HOTLINE

## Call before digging; be safe

Are you planning to install a fence, build an outdoor shed, plant a tree, or some other project that requires excavation on or near your property?

If so, call Diggers Hotline of Nebraska at 1-800-331-5666 at least two days before you start. The one-call notification center will contact all of the utilities in your area to make sure that any underground facilities are marked before you begin your work.

If you don't call and you hit an underground cable, you could be hurt or suffer a severe injury from coming in contact with 7,200 volts of electricity. Also, you could be held liable for the costs associated with repairing the damages. And you could be fined from \$1,000 to \$5,000 for breaking the law.

When you call Diggers Hotline of Nebraska anytime 24 hours a day, seven days a week, an operator will answer, asking for such information as:

- Name, address, telephone number;
- Type of work being done;
- City and county; and
- Township, range, and section.

The information is entered into a computer and your "locate request" is sent by fax, e-mail, or phone to each hotline member who may have underground facilities in your area--like Elkhorn RPPD.

Most requests for ERPPD locates can be handled by maps at the district office. Personnel will let you know within two business days if the district has facilities at your site.

If we have underground wire at that location, an ERPPD employee will visit the site and place a cable/fault locator under the meter. This device sends a signal through the underground wire. Then a hand-held locator is moved across the ground like a metal detector. Looking at the locator screen, the employee can tell when the locator is directly above the cable. A red flag is placed there to indicate the electrical underground wire. Different colored flags are used by other service providers, such as water, natural gas, cable tv, telephone, etc, to indicate their respective facilities. The flag indicates horizontal location, not depth. Although they are placed as closely as possible above the service, you still should not dig within 18 inches on either side of the flag.

Diggers Hotline is a free service to you, and ERPPD's response to locate requests is also free to you because your safety is important.

For more information, visit the Diggers Hotline website at [www.ne-diggers.com](http://www.ne-diggers.com).

# ENERGY NEWS

## CFLs Die Differently

Worried when you hear a compact fluorescent lightbulb (CFL) pop or sizzle? Despite confusion caused by an e-mail hoax that is circulating, these sounds signal the bulb is working safely in its final hours. Smoke, a popping noise, and even a slight odor are typical and do not pose a fire risk as claimed in the misleading e-mail.

"As with any new product, it's important that consumers understand how it works," notes John Drenenberg, Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) consumer affairs manager.

With CFLs, light dims over time and the lamp may produce a dramatic pop, emit a distinct odor, and even release some smoke. Sometimes the plastic at the base of a CFL will turn black, which is normal in most cases as safety standards require application of special flame-retardant plastics.

"CFLs are one of the products we regularly test to specific requirements for electrical safety, fire, and shock hazards," Drenenberg notes. "Any popping sounds or smoke that a consumer might see when a CFLs burns out means that the bulb's end-of-life mechanism worked as it should have."

Consumers should look for the UL mark on packaging when purchasing CFLs. "If a CFL carries the UL mark, consumers know we have investigated it to specific safety requirements," reports Drenenberg.

For more information, visit the UL website [www.SafetyAtHome.com](http://www.SafetyAtHome.com).

*Source: Underwriters Laboratories*

**48 Hours Before You Dig  
Anything Anywhere  
Call Diggers Hotline  
1-800-331-5666  
or visit the website at [ne-diggers.com](http://ne-diggers.com)**

**Energy Efficiency**  
*Month Tip of the*  
Check your HVAC system's air filter monthly. If it looks dirty, change it. A dirty filter makes your system work harder.  
*Source: U.S. Department of Energy*

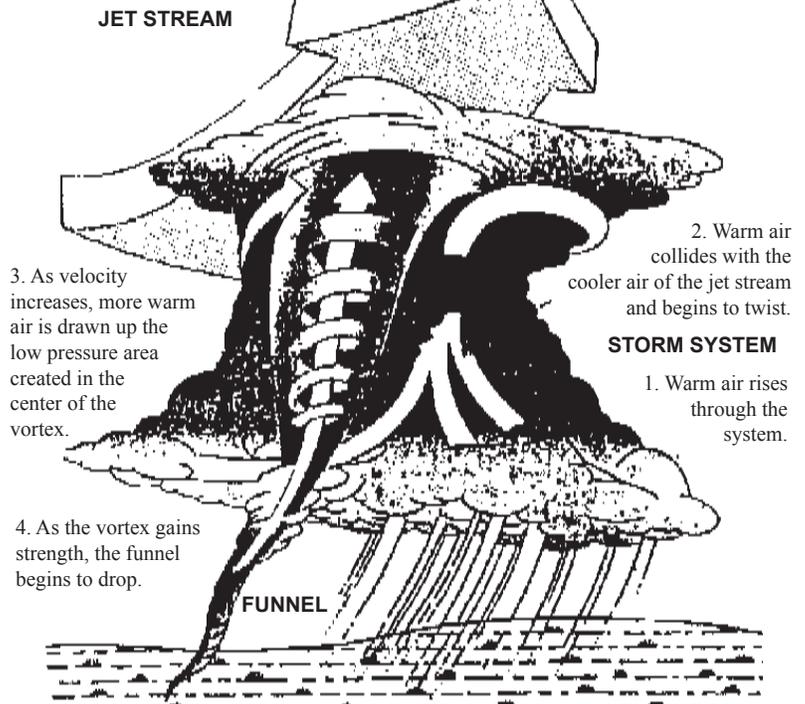


# Tornado season is approaching

April through September is known as Tornado Season in Nebraska. Because of the suddenness with which tornadoes develop, law enforcement and weather bureau officials stress knowing what to do to protect against injury. Review the steps that should be taken in the event of a tornado.

1. Plan ahead. Know—and be sure your family knows—what to do upon hearing a warning siren.
2. When possible, stay close to home. Beware of weather conditions and changes as they occur.
3. Seek shelter at the lowest level available; a basement, cellar, or small interior room is best. Avoid windows. Mobile homes should be evacuated.
4. When in the country, seek a low-lying area, such as a ditch or ravine. If in a vehicle, leave it. If in a public area, look for signs marking a tornado shelter. Avoid windows and buildings with span roofs.
5. If possible, carry a portable radio; listen for updates on weather conditions or safety instructions. Knowing ahead of time what to do in case of a tornado might save your life.

## Anatomy of a Tornado



Clip and Save

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

with Board position and subdivision

- Rod Zohner  
President.....II
- Tim Means  
Vice President ..II
- Larry Lindahl  
Secretary .....III
- Dennis Kuchar  
Treasurer ..... I
- Jerrell Dolesh  
Director .....II
- Mark Miller  
Director ..... I
- Joe Thiele  
Director .....III
- Greg Weidner  
Director ..... I
- David Hoefler  
Director .....III

### MANAGER

Tom Rudloff

## For Emergency Service or Outage Reporting

**1-800-675-2185**

### After Hours Note:

The entire 800-number *must* be dialed, even for a local call.

## Communicate Electronically With ERPPD

Internet: [www.erppd.com](http://www.erppd.com)

E-mail: [erppd@erppd.com](mailto:erppd@erppd.com)



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

It's the law!  
Call 811 Before You Dig!

Or 1-800-331-5666  
Diggers Hotline of Nebraska

## Outage Checklist

In the case of an outage:

- First check to see if the fuses below the meter are good.
- If you have breakers, make sure they are on and have not kicked out.
- If you have a double-throw switch for standby power, make sure it is in the correct position.
- Check with neighbors to see if they have power. By doing this before calling us, we can determine if it is a line or an individual outage. This can help cut down on outage duration.
- Please, be prepared to give the name on the account, plus the consumer number and/or the legal location. This will assist us in sending our crews to the correct place.

## Questions about your bill?

Please call the ERPPD office at 402-675-2185 or toll-free, 1-800-675-2185, during office hours, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. M-F, in regards to billing questions. When calling the office concerning billing problems, it will save time if you would have your meter serial number or customer account number and current meter reading. Remember to call the Battle Creek office if you have billing questions. All account payments should be mailed to:

**Elkhorn Rural Public Power District**  
P.O. Box 310  
Battle Creek, NE 68715