

THE WIRE

CURRENT NEWS FROM THE ELKHORN RURAL PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

December 2011

Serving the Elkhorn River Valley since 1940

Volume 20, Number 12



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the Employees and Directors of Elkhorn Rural Public Power District

“Dedicated to providing SAFE, RELIABLE, COST-EFFECTIVE electricity for ALL customers”

Notice to Irrigators

Watch your mail for an invitation to an informational meeting, sometime in January or February. We are planning on hosting two sessions, one in the eastern part of the district and one in the western part.

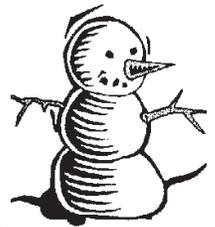
Dates have not been finalized at this time. Topics to be discussed include load management, irrigation pumping list, advantages of power factor corrective capacitors, and a demonstration of the ir-

Elkhorn Rural Public Power District

will be closed

Monday, Dec. 26,
for **Christmas Holiday**

and
Monday, Jan 2
for **New Year's Holiday.**



RATE NEWS

Rate Study in Progress

In November, I reported that our rate consultant was working on a Cost-of-Service study, in preparation for a 2012 Rate study. The cost of service study has been completed, so work is in progress to set the rates for 2012. Elkhorn Rural Public Power District is faced with a 6.5% rate increase from our power supplier, Nebraska Public Power District.

ERPPD management and staff are working to trim costs wherever possible without affecting the reliability of the system, and we are confident that we can hold your rate increase to something less than the 6.5%. There are many factors that go into establishing on the rates, including the cost of power and the future work plan budgets. The board of directors will receive the rate study recommendations and will be prepared to take action at the December 13 board meeting to set the final rates for 2012, with the rates to be effective January 1, 2012.

Rate schedules for the more common rate classes will be published in the January issue of the WIRE newsletter, and all rate schedules are available for you to view online at www.erppd.com.

SAFETY NEWS

Be Safe When Decorating



Shawn Miller of Indiana was hanging Christmas lights at his mother's house like he did every year, when tragedy struck. The string of lights Shawn held made contact with a power line when he threw it into a tree. Shawn suffered 27 exit wounds, the loss of one hand, and a finger on another but miraculously survived. Shawn Miller and his mother hope their lesson can save other families from harm.

Go to our website (www.erppd.com) and click on the SafeElectricity icon to see the entire story and watch a video interview with Shawn Miller.

Space Heater Safety

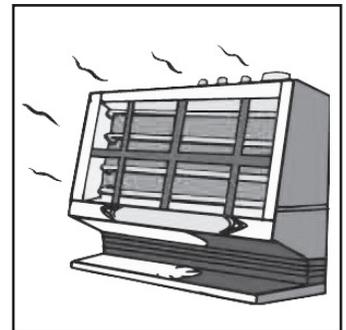
With winter on its way, many people will be getting out space heaters to help them stay warm. They may provide needed comfort, but they can also be deadly if they are not used with care, cautions Safety Director Wayne McCormick.

Space heaters need space all around them to be able to circulate air safely. Place space heaters on a level surface away from areas where they could be bumped and knocked over, and at least three feet away from flammable materials--including drapes, furniture, and clothing.

Never leave a space heater unattended or running while you sleep. Before using a space heater, inspect the cord for any cracks or worn spots. If any are found, replace the cord or the heater. Avoid using extension cords. If one is necessary, use a heavy duty cord marked with a power rating at least as high as the heater. Take care to avoid overloading circuits. If you are planning to buy a portable space heater, look for one that has been tested and labeled by a nationally recognized testing facility and that has all of the following safety features:

- Tip-over switch that automatically shuts off the heater if it falls over.
- Protective grill to prevent anyone from touching the heating elements.
- Sealed heating elements encased in metal or ceramic.

Elkhorn Public Power wants everyone to take steps to stay safe and comfortable this winter.



Giving Efficiency Gifts

With the holiday rush starting earlier and earlier every year, get a jump-start on your shopping wish list with some great green gifts. Using the tips below, you can have everything wrapped up before the ho, ho, ho turns into go, go, go!

Why give efficiency?

Green giving is thoughtful on many levels. The person receiving the gift has a new gadget to use that keep long-term electric costs low year-round.

“Choosing a green gift can be easy,” says Brian Sloboda, senior program manager for the Cooperative Research Network (CRN). “Be aware of energy use. Look for any mention of energy ratings on large appliances and televisions, or select unplugged gifts. Think solar, reusable, and recyclable. Even something as small as the packaging and wrapping can make a difference.”

Look for items with lightweight packaging. And think about wrapping your gift in something like a fabric bag that can be reused or even an accessory like a scarf to tie things up.

Green Gift Ideas

- For Decorators: LED Christmas lights (\$15-\$35)–These energy-efficient lights are becoming easier to find. They save on high holiday electric bills and stay cool to the touch. For a festive complete package, wrap in a decorative stocking.
- For Gardeners: Solar garden lights (\$15-\$50)–Available in endless colors, styles, and sizes, solar garden lights can be

a lovely addition to your favorite green thumb’s garden. To up the green quotient, wrap in a burlap bag.

- For Cooks: Toaster oven (\$60 – \$140)–Especially great for the empty nester or those only cooking for one or two, toaster ovens are a good choice to save energy as an alternative to heating a large standard oven.
- For Movie Buffs or Sports Fans: ENERGY STAR-rated TV (price based on size)–Televisions are getting bigger and better. But before you give something that uses as much electricity as a refrigerator, look for the ENERGY STAR label. It will offer the smallest possible impact on your electric bills.
- For Techies:
 - Smart strip (\$20 - \$40)–This new cutting-edge technology is great for plugging in electronic gadgets. Not your average power strip, smart strips sport designated outlets that make it easy to power down certain devices to save energy while not affecting others plugged into the same strip.
 - Solar cell phone charger (\$55 - \$100+)–Help unplug energy-sucking chargers from the wall; solar chargers can be placed in a window to charge a cell phone or other devices like a GPS unit or even MP3 players anywhere the sun shines, even in a car on-the-go!

There are many options when you start looking for green gifts. Get creative, and remember that what you give impacts future electric bills. So give the green light for energy-smart gifts this year!

Electricity-Still a Bargain

We use electricity in nearly everything we do, and we are using more and more of it every year. I know that I have become very dependent upon electricity in my daily life-lighting, heating, cooling, cooking, communications, computers, etc. We often take electricity for granted, since most of us do not remember a time without it.

That is exactly why we work so hard to keep your electricity safe, reliable, and cost effective. It is one of those necessities of life that very few or none of us can do without.

Due to the diligence of the public power generators and utilities, electricity continues to be a bargain, especially compared to other consumer goods. Nationally, each year for the past 10 years, gasoline has increased 10.9%, a loaf of bread has increased 4.2% and a dozen eggs is up by 6.5%. During the same period of time, electricity has increased only an average of 3.7% per year nationally.

The next time you flip a switch, use your toaster, or wash a load of clothes, remember the value electricity holds. Keep in mind that we at Elkhorn Rural Public Power District are looking out for you, controlling costs wherever possible and using technology whenever we can to become more efficient in our day to day operations.

Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

During the holiday season, consider using ENERGY STAR-qualified lights and strands to decorate. They use 70 percent less energy than regular lights and last up to 10 times as long. They also give off less heat, reducing the risk of fire.

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (ENERGY STAR)



ONGOING MAINTENANCE

ERPPD Works To Improve System Reliability

Several projects that were done in 2011 to maintain and improve the reliability of the electrical distribution system include tree trimming, vegetation control, pole testing and replacing lines with bigger wires. All of these are investments that pay big dividends by reducing outages and accomodating the growth in the number of services.

ERPPD contracted with Wilson Tree Service to cut trees in and around Woodland Park near Norfolk. Wilson's crew has the equipment to work in close quarters. As we approach the winter season and the ground freezes, it is less efficient for our crews to build line, so our personnel will concentrate more on trimming and cutting problem trees in the rest of the district.

ERPPD contracted with S&L Pole Testing, Inc, to test poles in the district. We use pole testing to discover poles that are weak before the winter winds find them for us. S&L tested over 3,300 poles and found 36 poles that needed changed out. We started the pole testing program in the mid-eighties, and we have been over the entire district twice since that time.

The vegetation control contractor, Midwest Spray Team, Inc., covered 9 townships in the northwest part of the district, which will reduce the need for tree trimming and cutting trees in the future. Young trees are controlled before they can grow big enough to cause problems with our lines. Plans are to continue this practice in the future, because it is much cheaper to manage the trees when they are small than it is to deal with them after they are full-grown. Experts estimate that it costs 8 times more to trim or cut trees after they are full-grown than it is to eliminate them early.

There are certain areas in the district that have experienced load growth that approaches the maximum capacity of the wires in the area. Some of these areas were upgraded this summer, with more upgrades planned for 2012. We are also in the process of requesting bids for a permanent substation in the Ewing area, to be ready for the summer peak usage period.

All of these projects are continually scrutinized to assure the maximum return on investment. We believe that these projects fit our mission statement very well. ***"Elkhorn Rural Public Power District is dedicated to providing SAFE, RELIABLE, COST-EFFECTIVE electricity for ALL customers."***



BOARD OF DIRECTORS	
with Board position and subdivision	
Rod Zohner	President.....II
Tim Means	Vice President ..II
Larry Lindahl	SecretaryIII
Dennis Kuchar	Treasurer I
Jerrell Dolesh	DirectorII
Mark Miller	Director I
Joe Thiele	DirectorIII
Greg Weidner	Director I
David Hoefler	DirectorIII
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

E-mail: 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. 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**