

THE WIRE

CURRENT NEWS FROM THE ELKHORN RURAL PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

November 2011

Serving the Elkhorn River Valley since 1940

Volume 20, Number 11

Grassroots Effort Successful on Federal Legislation

The “Our Energy-Our Future” grassroots campaign, coordinated in Nebraska by the Nebraska Rural Electric Association, was successful in influencing federal legislation affecting public power. NREA issued two “Take Action Alerts”, one in September and one in October.

The September “Take Action Alert” supported legislation to control EPA over-regulation. The legislation was named the TRAIN act, which stands for ‘Transparency in Regulatory Analysis of Impacts on the Nation’. The bill requires an economic impact analysis of costly EPA regulations prior to their implementation.

The October “Take Action Alert” supported legislation which would block the EPA from regulating coal ash, a byproduct of coal-fired generating plants, as a ‘hazardous waste’. The bill, HR2273, would shift the responsibility for regulating coal ash to the states and out of the hands of the EPA. Coal ash is now being recycled into concrete for road construction and other building materials. Classifying it as a hazardous waste would cost Nebraska ratepayers up to \$35 million per year in disposal costs.

The next step for these bills is to get the senate to act upon and pass their versions of the legislation. NREA is working with our representatives on sponsoring this legislation.

Thank you to those of you who participated in the take action alerts. Your efforts truly made a difference. If you are not presently signed up for the alerts, please take a few minutes, complete the form on the back page of this newsletter, and send it back to our office (you can include it with your bill payment).

▶ LOOK UP
AND LOOK
OUT FOR
POWER LINES



Overhead power lines are common on the farm or in the field. However, failure to notice them can be a deadly oversight. Look up and look out for overhead power lines whenever you operate augers, move irrigation pipe or any other farm equipment.



Elkhorn Rural Public Power District
will be closed
Friday, Nov. 11, for Veterans Day
and
Thursday & Friday, Nov. 24 & Nov. 25,
to celebrate the **Thanksgiving weekend.**

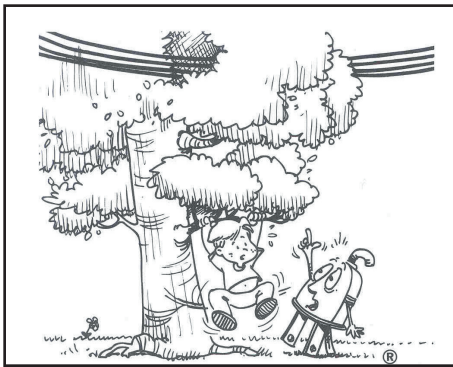


ERPPD CREWS TO TRIM TREES

I am sure that you have heard that the following items do not mix: water and electricity or oil and water. Let's add trees and power lines to the list. The main cause of the 2003 "blackout" of the entire northeast portion of the United States was a single tree limb that fell through a power line.

Elkhorn RPPD contracts with Wilson Tree Service to cut and trim trees during the spring and summer power line construction season, when all available employees are busy building line for new services and upgrading other lines as the load on the lines continues to grow.

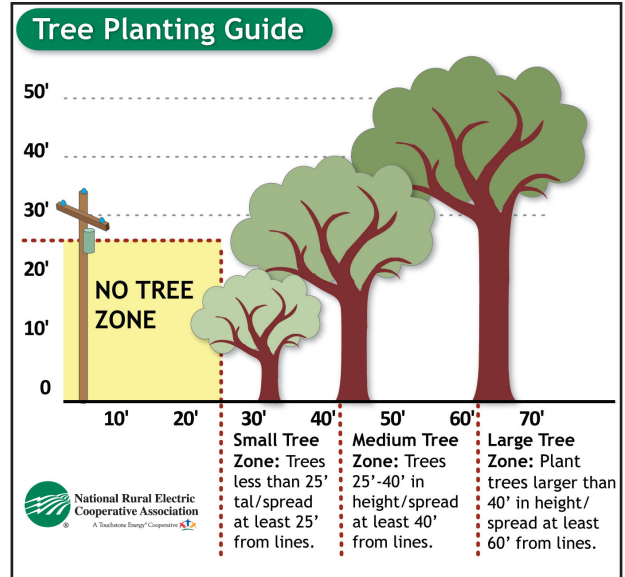
As we move into the winter season, when it is more difficult and somewhat less efficient to build line, our operations crews will be assigned to cut and



trim trees that have been identified through our regular line patrols as potential hazards. We regularly patrol 2,700 miles of distribution and sub-transmission lines within our service area, checking for trees that have grown too close to the lines or trees outside of the right of way that are tall enough to fall into our lines during a storm.

Trees can provide an excellent path for the electricity to travel to the ground, causing blinks and outages and stealing electricity that we have purchased but is lost before it can be sold. There are other sources of line loss, including wire resistance, but trees are the one thing most in our control.

Aside from the blinks, outages, and line loss, safety is a huge concern. Children climbing trees near power lines can be seriously injured or killed if they come in contact with the power lines. This alone would be enough reason to keep the trees cut or trimmed in the power line right of way.



Elkhorn RPPD will work with the landowners to address issues and concerns that arise when it comes to trimming and cutting trees. Landowners can also assist in the seemingly never-ending task of right-of-way management by planting the right trees in the right place and by removing volunteer trees that shoot up in the fence lines before they have a chance to grow into problem trees.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation in this process.

RATE NEWS

Although nothing is finalized at this time, the board of directors of Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), our wholesale power provider, will be acting on a proposed 6.5% increase at their November meeting. According to NPPD, their biggest cost driver is increased fuel costs, which accounts for 4% of the projected 6.5% rate increase. The increase will take effect January 1, 2012.

Once the final numbers are received from NPPD, our rate consultant will finalize a rate study to determine what impact this wholesale rate increase will

have on our retail rates.

Power costs amount to about 70% to 75% of the annual expenses for ERPPD. ERPPD is looking for ways to mitigate the increase by continuing to strive to be even more efficient and also utilizing technology whenever possible to cut down on expenses.

In 2011, ERPPD was faced with a 9.2% increase in power costs, but we were able to manage our controllable costs and only increased retail rates by an average of 6.5%.

Despite recent cost increases, electric rates in Nebraska remain a good value compared regionally and nation-

ally. The state's average overall retail electric rates continue to rank among the top 10 most affordable states for electricity.

NPPD is also committed to investing in energy efficiency and conservation programs for end-use customers. These programs delay NPPD's need for a new baseload generating plant and also give customers opportunities to reduce energy usage and help counter rising electricity costs.

Watch for more details in the December issue of the WIRE, which will be mailed the first week of December.



SAFETY NEWS

Pole Patrol

What do yard sale signs, basketball hoops, deer stands, satellite dishes, and birdhouses have in common? They're often found illegally attached to utility poles. But this isn't only a crime of inconvenience. Safety issues caused by unapproved pole attachments place the lives of lineworkers and the public in peril.

It may seem innocent, but a small nail partially driven into a pole can pierce a lineworker's glove, stripping away critical protection from high-voltage electricity.

"Elkhorn Rural Public Power District line crews climb utility poles at all hours of the day and night, in the worst of conditions," explains Wayne McCormick, director of safety & loss control for ERPPD. "Anything attached to utility poles can create serious hazards for our line personnel. Sharp objects like nails, tacks, staples, or barbed wire can



puncture rubber gloves and other safety equipment, making linemen vulnerable to electrocution."

ERPPD lineworkers have reported more poles used as community bulletin boards, satellite mounts, and even support legs for deer stands, lights, and carports. Not only do these attachments put line crews at risk—anyone illegally

placing these items on poles comes dangerously close to energized power lines with thousands of volts of energy pulsing overhead. It's always wise to keep any structure at least 10 feet away from utility poles.

Unauthorized pole attachments violate the National Electric Safety Code.

Please help us keep our linemen—and our community—safe. Remove any unauthorized items attached to utility poles. Fixtures not

belonging to the cooperative or another utility will be removed by ERPPD line personnel; the District is not responsible for any losses if an item is damaged or destroyed during removal.



ENERGY NEWS

Seal Cracks to Save Energy, Money

Finding and sealing air leaks can save you energy and money. Here's a tip from Elkhorn RPPD that can help keep your home cooler in summer and warmer in winter while lowering your utility bills.

Caulking cracks and openings can save you \$212 a year. Find cracks by waiting for a windy day and then carefully holding a lit incense stick or a smoke pen next to your windows, doors, electrical outlets, and other spots where outside air may infiltrate. If the smoke stream moves horizontally, you've found a leak that needs to be sealed.

Experts recommend using waterproof, flexible, and long-lasting silicone caulk to seal cracks and gaps that are less than

one-quarter-inch wide. Remove any old caulk and clean the surface before applying new caulk.



Fresh caulk takes several hours, or longer, to dry, so it's best to do the job on a dry day when humidity is relatively low and the temperature is above 45 degrees F. In addition to caulk, you can use low-expansion spray foam to seal leaks.

For other tips on how to save energy—and money—visit our website at www.erppd.com, or call our energy efficiency experts at Elkhorn Rural Public Power District, at (800) 675-2185.

Energy Efficiency
Tip of the Month

Use motion sensors on your lights to save on your electric bill. These sensors turn on lights automatically when someone enters a room and turns them off after a person leaves.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy



"You Can Make a Difference"

Join the "Our Energy Our Future" Grassroots Campaign

Another "Take Action Alert" was issued on Thursday, October 6, to mobilize grassroots support for a House bill (H.R. 2273). The bill essentially blocks the EPA from regulating Coal Ash as a hazardous waste. Coal ash is a byproduct of coal-fired generation plants, and is currently recycled into concrete used for road construction. Classifying coal ash as a hazardous waste would cost NPPD customers approximately \$35 million per year.

A big "THANK YOU" to those of you who are participating in the "Our Energy, Our Future" campaign. It is very easy to do, and yet has a tremendous impact on the decisions made in Congress.

The "Our Energy Our Future" campaign works to ensure that Americans have an affordable and reliable source of electricity for years to come. The campaign works like this: if there is legislation being debated in Congress that has a direct bearing on the rural electric industry, either favorable or detrimental, you will receive a "Take Action Alert" via email. This email will provide instructions on how you can voice your concerns to your Congressmen.

Simply complete the form below and return it to our office. We will sign you up for the campaign on your behalf. Then when the need arises, you will be ready to respond to a "Take Action Alert". We want to make it as easy as possible for our customers to contact their representatives in Congress. Please contact Wayne McCormick at ERPPD, 800-675-2185, if you have any questions.

Remember, it truly is "Our Energy and Our Future" that is at stake, and we have a voice in Washington, DC.

Start the Dialogue With Your Elected Officials

Name _____ Account # _____
Home Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____
Home telephone _____ Cell Phone _____ Is this your primary phone? ____ Yes ____ No
Email address _____
Signature _____

You can mail this form in with your bill payment or drop it off at our office. You can also email your information to us at erppd@erppd.com or call in the information during business hours at 1-800-675-2185.

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.

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Communicate Electronically With ERPPD

Internet: www.erppd.com

E-mail: erppd@erppd.com

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**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**