

NEBRASKA

Magazine

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February 2021



Inside:

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- AFAN Creates Ag Opportunities
- Move Over For Roadside Crews
- The Beauty of Nebraska Winters

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Volume 75
Number 2
February 2021

NREA 
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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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Wayne Price

Safety is our number one priority

Working with electricity can be a dangerous job, especially for lineworkers. In fact, USA Today lists line repairers and installers among the most dangerous jobs in the United States. That's why for Nebraska's public power districts and electric cooperatives, safety is the number one priority. This is not empty talk. Over time, these rural electric utilities have created a culture of putting crews' safety and that of the community above all else.

Our member-system's mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to all of their customers. Yes, they strive to deliver affordable and reliable electricity to you, but equally important, they want their employees to return home safely to their loved ones. This requires ongoing focus, dedication, vigilance – and your help!

Distractions can be deadly.

While you might want to express your interest in the work of these utility crews, please stay back and let them focus on their task at hand. Even routine work has the potential to be dangerous, and it takes their full attention and that of their colleagues, who are also responsible for the team's safety. Distractions can have deadly consequences. If a lineworker is on or near your property during a power outage, for vegetation management or for routine maintenance, please allow them ample room to work. These small accommodations help protect the crews— and you.

If you have a dog, try to keep it indoors while lineworkers are on or near your property. While most dogs are friendly, some are defensive of their territory and can't distinguish between a burglar and a utility worker. Utility crews work best without a pet “supervising” the job.

We recognize that for your family's safety, you want to make sure only authorized workers are on or near your property. You will recognize your local electric utility employees by their clothing and the service trucks with the utility name and logo on them. You may also recognize the lineworkers because they live right here in your local community.

Slow down and move over.

In addition to giving lineworkers some space while they are near your property, we also ask that you move over or slow down when approaching a utility vehicle on the side of the road. This is an extra barrier of safety to help those who help all of us. You can learn more by reading the article on Page 24-25 of this issue.



Dennis Houston

We Love Nebraska

Hello to our friends throughout rural Nebraska! Thanks to all of you who have sent us a note to let us know how much you enjoy the new Nebraska Magazine. We truly appreciate it. We're so happy that you love it! Speaking of love, February is the month of love with Valentine's Day. We live in a world right now that is divided at times and because of this, we don't always show our best side of who we are as people. My thoughts this month focus on who and what we love – our family, friends, the Nebraska spirit and the beauty of our state.

Love Nebraska

We are blessed to be a part of such a great state as Nebraska. Most of us have been social distancing in rural Nebraska long before it was cool. The great open spaces like the sandhills, a walk along a stream or a glance at that snow covered pasture bring a sense of peace to our hearts.

Love our family

Many of us have been fortunate to spend more time with our families during the pandemic. It has reminded us of the things that are truly important to us. I encourage you to make more time to play that board game tonight or break out the cards to enjoy that special game that Grandpa or Grandma taught you years ago.

Love our friends

Our friends are the ones who are always there for us, no matter what. Take time to let them know how much you appreciate them. Wintertime is a great time to check in on people you care about.

Love the Nebraska Spirit

The Nebraska way. We live in a very divisive world right now but let's not forget "the Nebraska way." We take care of our neighbors. We stop to help fix the flat tire for the stranger on the roadside. We say "hello" to someone on Main Street, regardless of who they voted for in the last election.

Love the beauty of our state

Nebraska is an incredible place in the winter. Many pages in this issue feature photos that capture the quiet beauty of Chimney Rock, snow geese on the Platte River and a tree covered in snow. Take a moment to enjoy the beauty of rural Nebraska and love the place that you are lucky enough to call home.

Love to hear what you think

I'd love to hear what you think of Nebraska Magazine. Drop me a note at dhouston@nrea.org to share your feedback. Do you know a photographer in your area who is a master at capturing absolutely amazing photos of rural Nebraska? If so, let us know. We are also always looking for ideas that tell the story of rural Nebraska.

Happy Valentines Day from our family to yours!

Dennis Houston
dhouston@nrea.org



Ice Fishing in Nebraska

by Jerry Kane

Catching fish through the ice can be a fun way to spend a winter day. Winter days are shorter, so any time spent outdoors is a bonus. But with ice-fishing, safety always should come first.

It always starts with ice thickness. When is the ice thick enough to go out for some ice-fishing? It depends.

One thing is certain: It's more fun when fishing with a friend. From a safety standpoint, it's especially smart when ice-fishing.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has some tips for a safe ice-fishing outing on the lake.

- A minimum of 3 inches of clear, blue lake ice will support a single angler; 5 inches will hold several anglers in single file.

- Slush ice is about half as strong as clear lake ice, so anglers should double the minimum thickness figures when encountering such conditions. Ice weakens with age, and late in the season, when it becomes dark and honeycombed, it is time to quit fishing for the season.

- Be especially careful on any lake that has moving water in it. Water movement hinders freezing, often leaving hard-to-detect thin spots.

- Materials imbedded in the ice, such as weeds or logs weaken ice. Large objects on the ice, such as duck blinds or ice shacks, can absorb the sun's heat and weaken ice. Ice near shore may be weakened by heat from the ground.

- Use an ice chisel or spud bar to strike the ice and evaluate conditions as you venture out.

- Wear ice picks around your neck in case the worst happens and you need something to grip the ice to pull yourself out of the water.

- Wear ice cleats on your boots for traction.
- Have a long throw rope with you in case of emergency.

Drowning is one immediate danger from falling through the ice, but hypothermia, a rapid, drastic lowering of body temperature that causes loss of the use



Jared Lorensen, fisheries biologist with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, uses a spud bar to check ice conditions before heading out with his ice-fishing equipment. (Nebraskaland Magazine/NGPC)

of limbs, disorientation, unconsciousness, and heart failure, is the real threat.

Dress in layers to stay warm, comfortable while ice-fishing

Staying warm and comfortable while on the ice will go a long way toward ensuring you have a fun outing ice-fishing.

The conditions will determine exactly how you will want to dress, but, regardless, you should dress in layers. The reason? You'll want to stay warm, and you'll need to avoid sweating.

Getting set up for fishing – or moving to new fishing areas on the ice – is where you can work up a sweat. This includes carrying or dragging your gear onto the ice, drilling holes and setting up a shelter.

Activity makes you sweat, even on frigid days on the ice. In the cold, sweat can lower your body temperature and lead to hypothermia. You should lose or loosen layers during periods of activity then put them back on when you are finished.

Wear layers of clothing that are loose-fitting and quickly can be removed. They will trap warm air against your body.

For a first layer to put on, wear a wool, synthetic or moisture-wicking base. Avoid cotton as a first layer as it holds moisture, and moisture against the skin on a cold day can lower the body temperature. Cotton or fleece can be worn as a second layer, but wool will provide warmth even when damp. An outer layer could be a waterproof, windproof parka, bib overalls or coveralls.

Thick socks and a good pair of insulated boots will keep your feet warm even though you're standing on ice all day. It's best that the boots not be too tight. More

room in the toe will allow you a chance to wiggle your toes to keep them warm.

Wear a warm hat or cap to cover the top of your head and ears. Pair it with a fleece neck gaiter for extra protection on windy days.

Anglers need to use their bare hands at some point — to bait jigs, tie knots, or unhook fish — but always should have at least a couple of pairs of gloves or mittens. They don't need to be tight-fitting. That way, they can be flung off quickly if a bait needs to be changed or a fish needs to be unhooked.

Cutting through options of making holes for ice-fishing

By Daryl Bauer

To be incredibly obvious, one of the unique things about ice-fishing is, well, the ice. An angler stands on the ice, and the fish are literally below your feet. To get to those fish, you have to have some specialized gear to make a hole.

Most anglers will start in the ice-fishing game without spending a lot of money on ice augers. An ice chisel or "spud bar" is the cheapest tool that can be used to make holes in the ice. In addition, spud bars are the best tool for checking ice thickness. For safety alone, I recommend every ice angler invest in a commercially-made spud bar or turn on the welder to make their own.

However, stepping up to a hand auger makes hole-drilling a lot easier. Hand augers also are relatively inexpensive, but understand the saying "you get what you pay for" often applies to fishing gear. Spend what you can afford.



Hand augers are relatively inexpensive and will cut a lot of holes in the ice as long as the blades are sharp. (Nebraskaland Magazine/NGPC)

When buying a hand auger, make sure to get one with replaceable blades. You want those blades to be razor-sharp and you will want to be able to replace them easily when they dull.

Hand augers come in a variety of sizes. Some anglers will go as small as a 4-inch diameter hand auger, but 6-inch hand augers are much more popular.

If you see the need to drill more holes, there are several power auger options. All of those will cost a few hundred dollars, but they will drill a lot of holes with a lot less effort.

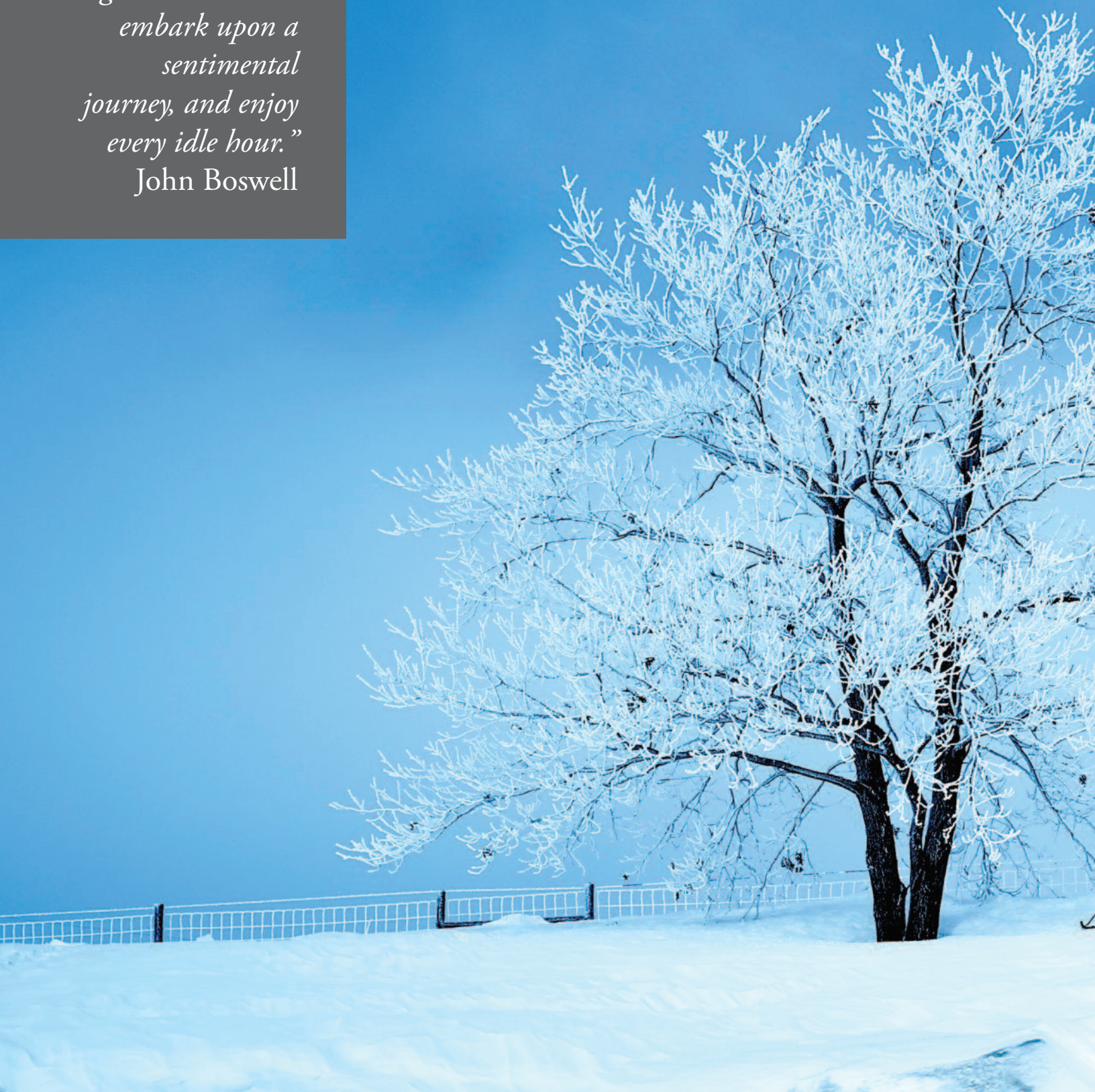
Which power auger is best depends on the angler, their budget, and needs. There are several reputable brands on the market that will do the job. Options now include electric models, including augers that can be powered by a cordless electric drill that you may already own. Other power augers are fueled by propane or gasoline.

Most anglers will jump to a larger diameter hole with a power auger. Eight-inch holes are most popular, and 10-inches are the largest legally-allowed on public waters in Nebraska.

Be sure to consider the type of blades on power augers. Cutting blades shave ice and rely on being razor-sharp. Chipping blades also must be sharp but chip ice as much as they cut. Some Nebraska waters, especially those in the Sandhills, can have sand and soil frozen in the ice and that can dull auger blades. Chipper blades tend to work better in those conditions.

“Winter, a lingering season, is a time to gather golden moments, embark upon a sentimental journey, and enjoy every idle hour.”
John Boswell

Winter in Nebraska





The importance of developing plans for drought

by **Cory Matteson**

Once a drought develops, ranchers must make decisions in rapid succession to prevent problems from compounding. Do you cull cows or send home contracted grazers from other operations? Do you purchase more feed to make up for the herd's lack of grazing options? Do you graze fall or winter pastures earlier than you previously planned?

To manage not only the operation, but the stress of running it when water is lacking, many ranchers are developing drought plans in advance. Based on research by Tonya Haigh, a rural sociologist with the National Drought Mitigation Center, those plans allow ranchers to make decisions based on specific "if-then" circumstances and triggers. The journal *Rangeland and Ecological Management* recently published an article by Haigh detailing the results of a survey of ranchers. She led a team that surveyed a collection of Northern Plains ranchers who endured a 2016 flash drought that significantly altered forage production in the area. Some had drought plans on file. Others did not.

Haigh said that while the drought center and other drought-preparedness agencies stress the importance of developing plans for drought, there is not much data that quantifies the difference between having one and not. This survey, the final piece of Haigh's dissertation research, was an opportunity to examine the differences in an isolated area, western South Dakota, following a localized drought event. The survey was part of a project funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Sectoral Applications Research Program, designed to improve agricultural drought early warning capabilities in the Missouri River Basin.

Of the 250 ranchers who responded to a mail-in survey, 59% reported having an if-then plan for drought. Haigh said there was no education or experience-based discrepancy between those who had a plan on file and those who did not, but ranchers with drought plans tended to run larger-scale operations. The survey, Haigh wrote, found that having a drought plan increased the

likelihood that ranchers took some actions during drought, but not others.

"Ranchers with drought plans were more likely than others to destock through some means due to drought conditions in 2016, controlling for operational factors, drought severity and any type of use of drought early warning information," Haigh wrote. "However, ranchers with a drought plan were no more or less likely than others to purchase supplemental feed, early graze fall/winter pastures or cull their breeding herds because of the drought."

Haigh said the survey results also showed that having a drought plan was linked with keeping a watchful eye on drought conditions. Ranchers with drought plans reported increased use and influence of on-farm rain gauges, National Weather Service reports and their own assessments of conditions on the land.

Having a drought plan in place, and monitoring for conditions that would lead them to utilize if-then strategies, led many ranchers with drought plans to destock early enough to take advantage of better market prices or secure more forage for their core herds.

"As ranchers in the region contemplate current dry conditions and wonder what 2021 will bring, this study shows that it would be worthwhile to spend time putting together or updating their plan for drought," Haigh said. "And it also suggests that by monitoring drought and the conditions on the ranch over the winter and into the spring, ranchers can be ready to implement their plans if needed and not be caught unprepared."

The study was led by Haigh. Co-authors included Michael Hayes of the School of Natural Resources, Jolene Smyth of the Department of Sociology, Charles Francis of the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, Mark Burbach of the Conservation and Survey Division in the School of Natural Resources and Linda Prokopy of the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources at Purdue University.

To learn more about the development of drought plans on ranches, visit the National Drought Mitigation Center's collection of rancher case studies at <https://drought.unl.edu/droughtplanning>.

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Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven't been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who's developed one of the world's most popular products created a completely new breakthrough... a personal electric vehicle. It's called the **Zinger**, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

"What my wife especially loves is it gives her back feelings of safety and independence which has given a real boost to her confidence and happiness! Thank You!"
—Kent C., California

The first thing you'll notice about the **Zinger** is its unique look. It doesn't look like a scooter. Its sleek, lightweight yet durable frame is made with aircraft grade aluminum. It weighs only 47.2 lbs but can handle a passenger that's up to 275 lbs! It features one-touch folding and unfolding—when

folded it can be wheeled around like a suitcase and fits easily into a backseat or trunk. Then, there are the steering levers. They enable the **Zinger** to move forward, backward, turn on a dime and even pull right up to a table or desk. With its compact yet powerful motor it can go up to 6 miles an hour and its rechargeable battery can go up to 8 miles on a single charge. With its low center of gravity and inflatable tires it can handle rugged terrain and is virtually tip-proof. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life.

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Eating Well for Better Health

by **Pamela A. Keene**

Good nutrition is about more than losing — or gaining — weight. By making wise choices about the foods and beverages you consume, you're laying groundwork to improve your health for years to come.

"Most people would be surprised at how making a few simple changes can influence your overall health," says Natasha Weddle, founder of TNB Fitness and The New Beginnings Center in Nashville. "Many people think that what you eat and drink only influences your body weight, but your energy levels, health and fitness — in fact the way your body functions — are dependent on good nutrition."

From building stronger bones and muscles to ensuring that your digestive, cardiovascular and brain functions are working well, nutrition is a key in regulating these systems.

"Carbohydrates — particularly breads, white flour and sugar — often play a role in diminishing the overall health of Americans," Weddle says. "Added sugar is the single worst ingredient in the modern diet; people are eating way too much of it."

Sugar is a major culprit in the growing incidence of obesity.

"Obesity is a complex problem with multiple causes, but among the likely suspects, sugar is high on the list," according to an article written by Chiadi E Ndumele, M.D., M.H.S. with Johns Hopkins Medicine. "Over the past half century, obesity rates have skyrocketed. In 1962, 46 percent of adults in the U.S. were considered overweight or obese. By 2010, that figure had jumped to 75 percent."

In addition to obesity, sugar intake contributes to the increased occurrence of Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

"If you don't do anything else, please monitor and work to decrease your sugar intake," Weddle says. "The average American consumes the equivalent of 20 teaspoons of sugar a day, found in soft drinks, added to



hot drinks, plus used in packaged prepared meals and multiple-ingredient foods."

Sugar is hidden in many foods. For instance, foods labeled "low fat" are most likely enhanced with extra sugar.

"Learn to read labels and make better choices," she says. "Even if you just cut out 30 percent of your sugar intake, you're making better choices."

Weddle says too many people take the approach of short-term adjustments, whether their goal is to lose weight or change an eating habit. "Some say it takes 30 days to adopt a new habit, but to actually make a lasting change, starting with little steps and being consistent over the long haul is much more beneficial."

The human body depends on the right combination of foods to function well. "Too much or too little of a particular food or type of food can be detrimental," she says.



“Diets never work to help you change your weight,” Weddle says. “In fact, most people who diet may lose the weight, but as soon as they return to former eating habits, they regain what they’ve lost and then some. Replace this yo-yo dieting with a commitment to change your eating habits and make better nutrition choices the majority of the time.

“Certainly, you can allow yourself to splurge from time to time, but the secret to managing your weight is to think about what you’re eating and choose wisely way more often than not. That way, you’ll slowly improve your nutrition and health.”

Pamela A. Keene is a freelance journalist who specializes in travel, gardening, personality and feature writing. She is also a photographer and accomplished sailor.

Improve your overall nutrition

Here are Weddle’s top 10 suggestions to improve your overall nutrition, no matter what your goal:

- Kick the sugar habit.
- Consciously make healthier choices such as snacking on a handful of nuts or raw vegetables versus a candy bar or crackers.
 - If you think you’re hungry, first try drinking a glass of water. Your body may be signaling you that it’s beginning to be dehydrated.
 - Drink a full glass of water before each meal.
 - Use a smaller plate at mealtimes; the amount of food will look bigger, and you’ll naturally eat fewer calories.
 - Fill one-fourth of your plate with protein, and three-fourths with a wide variety of vegetables.
 - Reduce your intake of carbohydrates such as white bread, starchy vegetables and high-sugar fruits. Instead, eat more protein, including eggs and whey protein, plus vegetables and fruits that will add more fiber to your meals.
 - Always eat at the table without distractions, even if you’re snacking, so you can pay attention to what you’re consuming.
 - Slow down when you eat, and savor your food.
 - Resolve to make nutritional lifestyle changes rather than “going on a diet.”

NPPD seeks renewable energy proposals to support Monolith

Governor Pete Ricketts joined representatives of Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), Monolith Materials, and Norris Public Power District for a joint announcement on January 4, 2021, regarding the facilitation of a significant addition to the renewable energy landscape in the state. The addition will provide significant short- and long-term value to Nebraska.

“This agreement paves the way for significant investment in the state. It

sends a clear message that Nebraska remains open for business for companies looking to expand in a state with affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy resources, including renewable opportunities,” noted Gov. Ricketts.

In order to facilitate Monolith Materials’ proposed \$1 billion expansion of its Olive Creek facility (OC2) near Hallam, Nebraska, NPPD and Monolith have signed a letter-of-intent outlining the companies’ intentions to procure enough renewable energy resources to generate two million megawatt-hours annually.

NPPD President and CEO Tom Kent said NPPD will solicit bids for the project through a request for proposals (RFP) for new wind or solar generation, including energy storage, through a Power Purchase Agreement.

“The approximately two million megawatt-hours of generation would create a sufficient number of renewable energy certificates (RECs) to meet 100 percent of Monolith’s average annual energy usage and meet their environmental and sustainability goals,” Kent added. “While we are adding additional generation resources, NPPD will continue to maintain our highly competitive rates, which was one of the reasons Monolith moved its operations to Nebraska.” Kent noted that to reach that generation figure, the renewable resource projects could be comprised of wind, solar, or a mix of the two.

Norris PPD and NPPD have a long and outstanding relationship that enables customers, like Monolith, to realize the benefits of public power, which includes competitive rates, reliable and resilient service along with excellent customer service. We provide all of these benefits safely, while being dedicated to operating in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner.

Norris PPD General Manager and CEO Bruce Vitosh



NPPD will be securing the generation resources which will be a large addition to the District’s renewable energy resources in the state. Power to the facility will be delivered by Norris Public Power District in Beatrice, a wholesale customer of NPPD.

“Norris is willing to accommodate our customers to help them fulfill their power supply needs as the electric industry evolves. Norris is pleased that Monolith will

achieve their environmental and sustainability goals,” Norris General Manager and CEO Bruce Vitosh said.

“Renewable electricity is the primary input to our proprietary process” said Rob Hanson, co-founder and chief executive officer of Monolith. “While affordability and reliability are key business considerations, the sustainability of our power supply is also a critical factor for Monolith. We use this renewable electricity to sustainably make essential products for the automotive and agriculture sectors. This means hundreds of good paying advanced manufacturing jobs right here in Nebraska – jobs you can build a family around.”

A \$100 million investment that has created 50 jobs, Olive Creek 1 (OC1), Monolith’s first production facility, is already putting into practice the company’s focus on sustainability, utilizing renewable energy credits to offset 100% of its electricity needs. With this agreement, Monolith plans a mix of solar and wind generation resources along with battery energy storage to provide sufficient renewable power to offset its OC1 and OC2 operations in the future.

NPPD is expecting to enter into power purchase agreements by Sept. 1, 2021, with commercial operations expected to begin no later than Dec. 31, 2025. NPPD plans to issue the RFP in March 2021.

Advocating on behalf of our membership

The 2021 legislative session is now in full swing. This year's session is a 90-day session and is scheduled to run until June. COVID-19 precautions are having an impact on how the Nebraska Rural Electric Association (NREA) interacts with elected officials, however, we are still able to advocate on behalf of our membership and the electric ratepayers of our state. There are a number of important issues that the Legislature will be discussing this year including overhaul of the state's tax structure, legislative redistricting as a result of the new census numbers, balancing the state's budget...and many other issues.

Here are a few highlights of the issues NREA will be engaged on this session.

Rural Broadband

Access to rural broadband has become a huge issue across rural America. In light of the global pandemic, we have all become keenly aware of the importance of broadband as we seek to remotely connect. Public power is precluded in the Nebraska state statutes from delivering internet to retail customers, but that does not mean that public power cannot play a role in supporting the development of rural broadband. Opportunities for the NREA to promote the development of better internet service in rural areas will present themselves, and NREA will promote the development of partnership opportunities where public power can work with rural internet companies to help bring broadband to all Nebraskans.

Critical Energy Workers

Statewide flooding and a global pandemic have highlighted the importance of electric service to all Nebraskans. Often when Nebraska experiences an emergency, first responders and emergency personnel are given special permissions which allow them to conduct their work efficiently. Legislation has been introduced which will designate line workers as "Critical Energy Workers." NREA will be monitoring this legislation closely to ensure public power employees are able to restore power as efficiently and safely as possible during an emergency situation.

Open Meetings Act

As political subdivisions of the state, public power districts are subject to the Open Meetings Act meaning the public is allowed to access and participate in our board meetings. COVID-19 has highlighted the need for publicly elected boards to be able to conduct meetings virtually. LB 83 was introduced to update the statutes regarding virtual conferencing and to allow for virtual meetings during a public emergency, such as a pandemic, while protecting the public's right to access and participate in these meetings.

Renewable Energy Development

The development of renewable energy resources and reduction of carbon emissions are issues that will be addressed through a number of introduced bills in this legislative session. Often these bills come in the form of mandates on the utility that bypass the local-control of the public power district or electric cooperative board. Costs, impacts on reliability, the remaining life of existing assets, and environmental impacts, are only a few of the issues that must be considered as new forms of electric generation are considered. NREA believes that locally-elected board members are best able to make the decisions that impact their district. A mandate is not necessary as many of Nebraska's utilities are moving forward by participating in renewable generation projects as they make sense for their customers. As these bills are discussed by the Legislature, NREA will work to protect the integrity of our electric system and ensure electric utilities are able to plan for their future generation needs in a way that maintains affordable and reliable electric service across Nebraska.

The success of any organization comes in the active involvement and participation of its membership. NREA invites you to join our grassroots team at nrea-action.org. Rather than a single voice, NREA's grassroots program mobilizes a movement of Nebraskans concerned about energy issues and affordable electric rates. With the active involvement of all of our members, the NREA and its customers can be a powerful voice in Lincoln.

Rural issues in Nebraska

The Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska, or AFAN, has been working to grow the livestock sector for the last 15 years and will continue to do so for years to come.

Aside from working to advance livestock development within our state, AFAN also works to recruit agriculture and food processing businesses to the state. Since the conception of the organization, AFAN has been focused on encouraging the development of livestock and working with communities and Nebraska leaders to create opportunities for industries that add value to Nebraska agricultural output and energize the economy.

Our team works to advance livestock development within the state by working with Nebraska producers who are looking to add to or expand their current operations. AFAN's free one on one consulting services is a resource we provide for any producers considering expansion or modernization of livestock facilities. This resource aids in the areas of state regulations, zoning, site feasibility and financing questions.

One major project that has kept us busy the last four years has been the Lincoln Premium Poultry project. In 2020, we were able to see this project come to fruition. In September, the LPP plant in Fremont, Neb. reached full plant capacity which will supply Costco with nearly 2 million chickens each week! The LPP project will use about 350,000 bushels of corn and 3,000 tons of soybean meal every week. The soybean meal translates to about 126,000 bushels of soybeans being used each week. Throughout this project, our team at AFAN helped countless families walk through the process of building barns; from attending zoning hearings, siting

**AFAN
was formed in
2005 by the leading
agricultural
organizations in
Nebraska to be a
resource for
Nebraska
producers.**



barn sites, and hosting open houses.

LPP offered an opportunity for many families to add value back to their operations by building barns which also got generations moved back to the family farms more times than not. Take Springbank Poultry in Allen, Neb. for example. Hannah Borg, whose family added a poultry operation, says it has given her the opportunity, as the sixth generation, to return to the family farm for her career. "My parents decided to expand and diversify our crop/cattle farm operation by building barns for Lincoln Premium Poultry," she said. "Starting any new business is hard but starting a new business with no existing knowledge is even harder. My mom and I had never stepped foot into a chicken barn before the day we got our first batch of chickens so every aspect of



Hannah Borg, left, and her mother Debbie Borg started Springbank Poultry in Allen, Nebraska.

raising chickens was brand new to us. Everything that we do daily had to be learned. It took us awhile but now we are confident in our abilities to be successful pullet growers. We are proud to be a part of growing chickens for Costco.”

Contract feeding has been a great thing for our state and family farms. The greatest opportunity within our state for the upcoming year in contract feeding lies within the pork industry. Despite everything that happened in 2020 we are still seeing growth in Nebraska Pork Production. Darren Hegemann from Howells, Neb. is a recent graduate of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. He is returning to the family farm to contract feed hogs for Cactus Family Farms with his parents. Darren knew early on that he wanted to return

to the family farm as the fourth generation after he finished college but knew that acquiring more land to farm would be difficult, that’s when the conversation started about adding livestock. Darren comments that “Adding livestock allows us to add to our operation so I can return home and feeding hogs will allow us to utilize the manure on our crop acres which will cut down the use of synthetic fertilizers.”

Pork production in Nebraska continues to be a growing topic of discussion. This is something our team at AFAN recognizes and wants to encourage at our Annual Nebraska Pork Expo. The Expo is an opportunity to learn about the swine industry and talk directly to



Darren Hegemann from Howells, Nebraska is returning to the family farm to contract feed hogs.

integrators and others to help producers decide if swine production is right for their operation. The 2020 Nebraska Pork Expo was held online as a Webinar but will be held in York, Neb. on July 21st, 2021.

In the upcoming months, AFAN will be co-hosting multiple open houses with some of our partners in the agriculture industry. These open houses will give producers the opportunity to tour new facilities in the areas of pork production and confined cattle production. Be sure to visit our Facebook page for specific details.

The agriculture industry has suffered many hardships over the last years from the bomb cyclone, commodity prices and Covid-19 but as we look into the future, we are ready to stand as a partner and advocate for all of our producers to grow the livestock industry within the great state of Nebraska.





Snow Geese Near Kearney

If you can't remember when you purchased your space heater, it might be time to replace it. Just like the flip phones of yesteryear have progressed into today's modern cell phone, portable space heaters have come a long way too. Most of today's models have built-in safety features, such as non-exposed coils and sensors that detect overheating or touch, as well as an automatic shut-off feature if it gets tipped over.

Regardless of whether your space heater is fresh out of the box or several years old, it should be used safely, since most home heating fire deaths (86%) involve using one, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). In fact, heating equipment is the second-leading cause of U.S. home fires, right behind cooking.

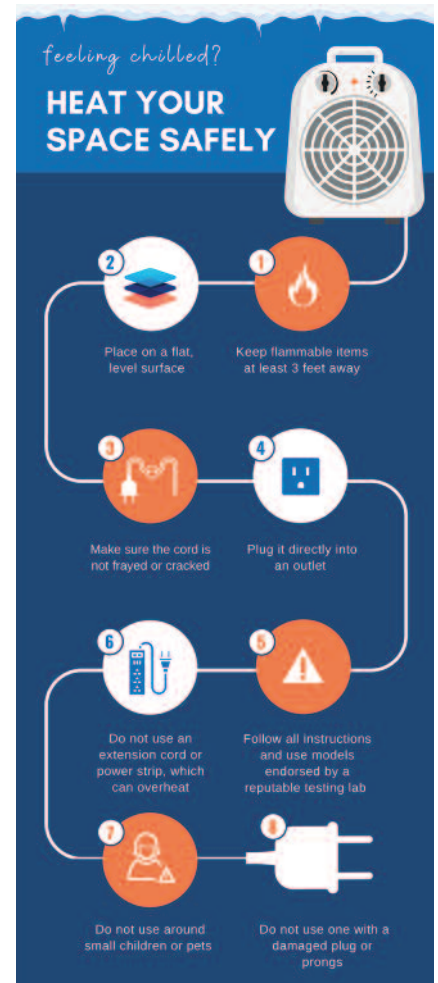
Along with using a unit that is in good working order, be sure to keep clothing, papers, rugs and other flammable items at least 3 feet away

from a space heater. More than half of the heating-related home fires start when items are too close to the heat source, according to the NFPA, including upholstered furniture, clothing, a mattress or bedding.

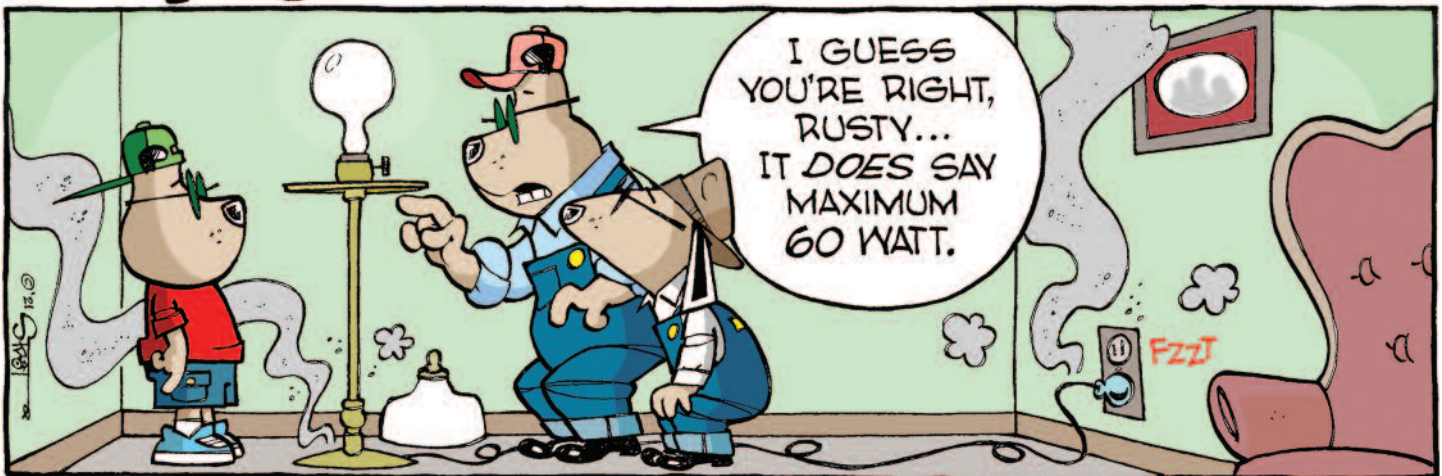
Follow these space heater tips:

- Read all instructions and only use as recommended.
- Do not leave a space heater unattended.
- Plug it directly into an outlet; most power strips and extension cords are not equipped to handle the energy spikes caused by a space heater cycling on and off.
- Unplug any other item from the outlet you are using; also try to use a dedicated circuit to avoid overload.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Turn them off before you leave the room or go to sleep.

Use a space heater with care. For additional safety tips, visit SafeElectricity.org.



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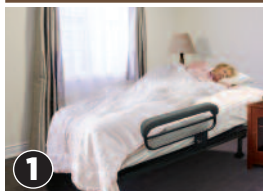
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For millions of Americans, “Rise & Shine” has become a thing of the past. Mobility and balance issues have forced many people to struggle getting in and out of bed. Not being able to get out of bed by yourself can be inconvenient, undignified and downright dangerous. To solve this problem, this product has been introduced in continuing care and other health care facilities. Now, thanks to *firstSTREET*, the leading marketer of innovative products for seniors in the United States, that same bed can enable people to get up, get going and live independently in their home. It’s called the UpBed™, and there is nothing else like it. The secret to the UpBed™ is its revolutionary system for raising the mattress to any position for a variety of activities. It features a state-of-the-art mattress with memory foam for a great night’s sleep... like sleeping on a cloud. With the touch of a button, it gently raises your upper body to a “sitting up” position,

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Fresh Snowfall on Chimney Rock





Please Move Over for Roadside Crews

by Paul Wesslund

Every year, workers along the sides of roads are injured or killed when a car crashes into the crew's site, even though it's marked with bright cones and warning signs.

There's an easy way to reduce those incidents that harm police officers and other first responders, road construction workers and utility crews. There's a slogan to help remind drivers. There's even a law.

The slogan is "slow down or move over." It's good advice and a decent thing to do to keep people safe. It's also a requirement in all 50 states.

Legislatures first started passing Move Over laws about 25 years ago to reduce the year-after-year statistics of harm to roadside emergency workers. In the past five years, states have started to specifically add electric and other utility projects to their Move Over or Slow Down laws.

It's an addition that's welcomed by your local electric cooperative because they were part of the effort to expand the law to help protect line crews.

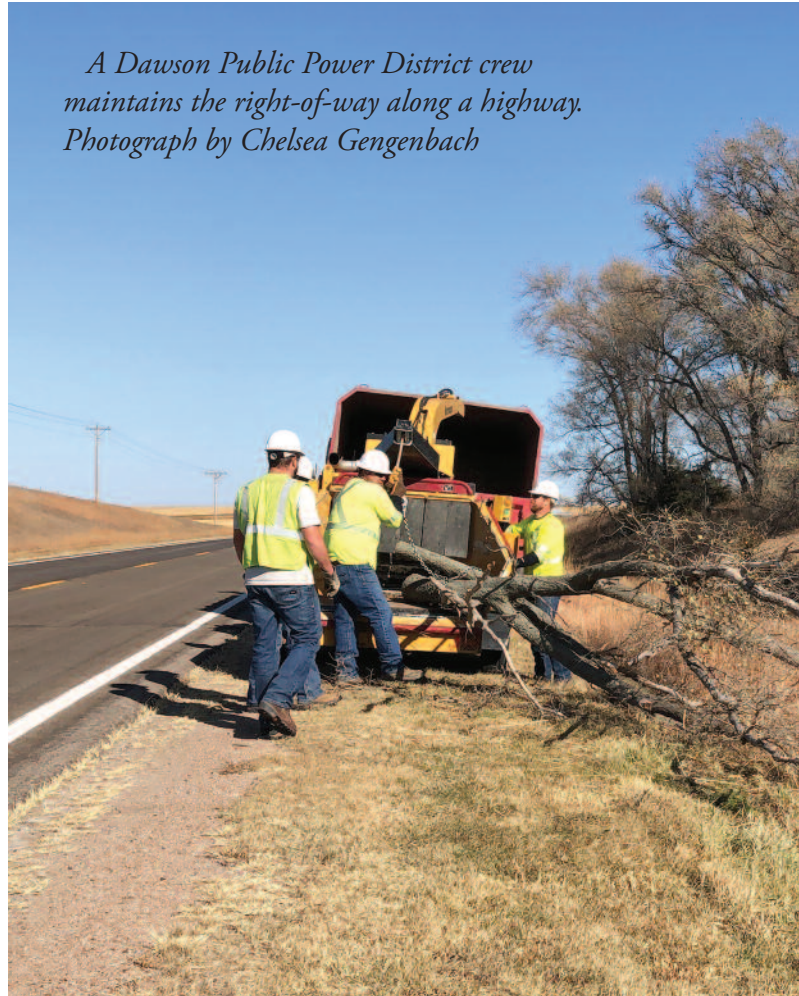
Protecting line crews is a top priority for Nebraska's public power districts and electric cooperatives, and it's a safety measure everyone can help with, says Dennis Houston, NREA CEO.

"Move Over is not only a good law, it's also the courteous thing to do," says Houston. "These crews already perform dangerous work to keep the lights on every day. They deserve a work environment that's as safe as possible."

There are slight differences in each state's Move Over laws, but not so much that you can't figure out the right thing to do, even if you're traveling from state to state. Here are the basic requirements:

- Within 200 feet before and after a work zone, which will be marked with bright signs and marker cones, and often flashing lights, change lanes if there's more than one lane on your side of road so that there is an empty lane between your vehicle and the roadside crew.
- If it's not possible or safe to change lanes, slow

*A Dawson Public Power District crew maintains the right-of-way along a highway.
Photograph by Chelsea Gengenbach*



down. Many states specify slowing down to 20 mph below the posted speed limit if it's 25 mph or more. Yes, that means if the posted speed limit is 25 mph, slow down to 5 mph.

- Drivers must obey all traffic directions posted as part of the worksite.
- Keep control of your car—yes, that's a requirement in many Move Over laws. And yes, it is more of a general guidance than a rule for a specific speed. It means you need to pay attention and respond to weather conditions—heavy rain or a slick road might mean you're required to slow down even more than 20 mph. And no texting, fiddling with the radio or other distractions.

It's polite, and it's the law.



people familiar with the area to anticipate the changed traffic pattern. Utility work, however, can start and finish in a few hours, possibly raising risks with drivers who might think they know the road ahead.

Another risk to watch for is when worksites are being put up or taken down. Roadside accidents can happen as crews are setting up signs and traffic cones.

My father-in-law used to tell his daughter every time they parted, "Drive all the time." What he meant was that she should pay attention, and it's good advice for all of us.

Don't drive distracted. Drive according to the conditions of the road. Be courteous to roadside work crews. Watch the signs and obey them. And certainly, follow laws like Move Over or Slow Down. It's good advice that could save a life.

PLEASE MOVE OVER FOR ROADSIDE CREWS

- Penalties for violating those requirements range from \$100 to \$2,000, or loss of your driver's license.

In Nebraska a driver approaching a stopped emergency vehicle, including utility vehicles, with flashing lights and traveling in the same direction to vacate the lane closest to the vehicle or reduce speed and maintain a safe speed while passing the vehicle. If vacating the closest lane is not possible, a driver must slow to a safe speed.

Electric utility crews are special cases to watch out for. A study of utility worksite accidents found that the relatively temporary nature of power line repairs could surprise motorists. A roadside construction operation might close a lane for days or weeks, giving time for

! If you see police, firefighters, utility crews or other emergency personnel on the side of the road, please slow down and move over when possible.

! ***Together, we can keep our crews safe.***

Q : My husband and I just bought a home that was built in the 1970s. The kitchen appliances are so old that they may be originals, but we only have enough money for one appliance upgrade. Which appliance replacement will help reduce our energy bills the most?

A : You're smart to consider energy use as you look at replacing appliances because most new appliances use much less energy than they did in the past. Manufacturers have found innovative ways to reduce appliance energy use without sacrificing performance. The federal government began tightening appliance standards in the 1980s and has continued as technological innovations became more cost-effective.

It may seem like the oldest appliance should go first. That may make sense if you want the looks and features of a newer oven or dishwasher. But with most appliances, the energy savings you get from a new one will take several years to pay for itself with the energy saved.

The appliance replacement most likely to produce the greatest energy savings is your refrigerator. An older fridge can cost about \$20 to run every month.

Replacing an old fridge with a new EnergyStar-rated model can cut that down to less than \$5 a month. The EnergyStar label certifies that the appliance saves energy. New refrigerators will include an additional label, the Energy Guide label, which shows how much energy it uses annually and compares that to the most and least efficient models available.

It's also possible to measure how much energy your fridge is using with a kWh meter. Energy auditors use these meters to measure energy use for common household appliances. Sometimes the energy use of an



Replacing an old fridge with an EnergyStar-rated model can cut the monthly cost to operate from \$20 to less than \$5 a month. Photograph by Scott Van Osdol

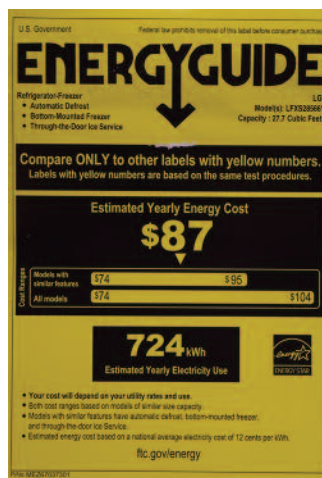
older fridge can be reduced by replacing the seal around the door.

When you're looking to replace an old fridge, style counts. A top-freezer setup is the most efficient, while a lower-freezer unit offers medium savings, and a side-by-side style is the least energy efficient.

If your goal is to save money on your energy bill, resist the urge to keep the old fridge in the basement or garage—that won't help you reduce your energy use. An old fridge in an uninsulated garage on a hot summer day can use a lot of energy. Maybe you just need more freezer space. If so, we recommend the most efficient freezer you can find. You can find recommendations on www.energystar.gov.

If your current fridge is in good condition, another appliance you may want to consider upgrading is the dishwasher. With most of us spending more time at home these days, chances are you're using your dishwasher more than you used to.

As with any major purchase, be sure to read customer reviews for any brands and models you're considering, and look for additional opportunities to save money, like an upcoming Presidents' Day appliance sale.



Is your irrigation system ready for the new year?

While some erroneously think farmers have the winter off for vacation, Nebraska crop producers have a million things to do before planting a single seed. One includes having their irrigation systems ready to pump and provide water if rain doesn't come. If you irrigate with one or more of the 55,000 plus center pivot systems in Nebraska, do you know the expected life of sprinkler packages? While some producers may consider this a low-priority question, it only takes a few non-performing sprinkler components to make a significant decrease in yields; especially if left unchecked over several seasons.

Sprinkler packages for center pivots and lateral-move systems are designed to deliver more than 90 percent water delivery uniformity under no-wind conditions after considering system capacity, distance from the pivot point to a specific sprinkler, spacing between sprinklers, field topography and pumping plant performance among other potential considerations. Standardization in nozzle diameters available (diameters increase in 1/128 – inch increments) does create a small amount of nonuniformity during design.

However, once installed and operational, nozzle wear, plugging, pressure regulator effectiveness, water quality, component quality, system leaks, weather damage and incorrect design parameters can dramatically decrease the rated life of outlet components and affect delivery

uniformity as soon as the first time you irrigate.

Irrigation experts recommend the following simple, five-part inspection each spring before the crop canopy is present:

1. Verify the system is supplied by the correct flow rate and operating pressure
2. Compare the sprinkler sizes installed to the sprinkler design printout
3. Verify the last sprinkler is supplied with correct operating pressure when the end gun is operating and the last tower is at its highest point
4. Verify the end gun is set to run according to the design sheets
5. Verify sprinklers are not cracked or broken and deflection pads are not worn excessively

As an EnergyWise partner, your local electric utility wants to help you make the most of the energy needed for irrigating with all-electric center pivot or linear tower systems. Participating utilities will provide a \$500 incentive when producers replace all of a system's existing outlet components, such as sprinkler heads, sprayers, rotators, plates, pads and nozzles, and regulators on qualified systems. Other program requirements apply.

Start by visiting with your local electric utility, or visit <https://www.nppd.com/incentives/prescriptive-irrigation> for more details.



Photograph by Gena Wells

Tasty Meals with Protein-Packed Peanuts

Starting fresh with a new year is a chance to hit the reset button for many people, and your family can use this opportunity to rethink homemade meals while striving for nutritious (and still delicious) dishes. From snacks to the main course each evening, the options are nearly endless for planning a revamped menu with healthier ingredients.

Dinnertime can be a cinch with Peanut Butter Chicken, a simple dish that takes less than 20 minutes to make when busy evenings call for a quick solution. Snacking doesn't have to mean forgoing your dedication to nutritious choices either – these Peanut Granola Bars can be your made-at-home masterpiece for adults and children to enjoy.

These recipes from the Georgia Peanut Commission are powered by peanuts, a nutrient-rich superfood that delivers 19 vitamins and 7 grams of protein per serving for a health benefit punch in each bite.

Discover more nutritious recipe ideas at gapeanuts.com.



Peanut Butter Chicken

Peanut Sauce:

- 1/2 cup creamy natural peanut butter
- 3 tablespoons sweet red chili sauce
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1/4 cup hot water (optional)
- chopped unsalted roasted peanuts (optional)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil or avocado oil
- 1 1/2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts, diced into 1-inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 3/4 cup peanut sauce
- cooked brown rice
- assorted bell peppers, sliced

chopped unsalted roasted peanuts (optional)

To make peanut sauce: In small glass bowl, whisk peanut butter, sweet red chili sauce, apple cider vinegar, soy sauce and honey until blended smoothly.

Thin sauce with hot water to desired consistency. Garnish with chopped unsalted roasted peanuts, if desired.

To make chicken: In large skillet over medium-high heat, drizzle oil. Add diced chicken then pour soy sauce over top. Saute about 10-12 minutes until chicken is fully cooked.

Serve with peanut sauce, brown rice and colorful sliced veggies. Garnish with chopped unsalted roasted peanuts, if desired.

Peanut Granola Bars

- 1/2 cup honey
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons creamy peanut butter
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups rolled oats (quick or regular)
- 1 cup bran flakes
- 1 cup sweetened coconut flakes
- 1 cup dried fruit (raisins, blueberries or cranberries)
- 1 cup roasted peanuts, chopped

In large, shallow, microwavable dish, combine honey, butter, peanut butter, brown sugar, vanilla and salt.

Microwave at 50% power 2 minutes then whisk to combine and microwave at 50% power 2 minutes.

Add oats, bran flakes, coconut flakes, dried fruit and peanuts; stir to combine. Microwave on high 1 minute. Stir and microwave 30 seconds.

Press mixture into 13-by-9-inch baking dish lined with parchment or wax paper with some extra hanging over edges to easily lift bars out. Use bottom of glass wrapped with plastic wrap to press granola mixture firmly into pan. Allow to cool completely 30-45 minutes. Cut into 12-14 bars.



Chicken Alphabet Soup

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 rotisserie chicken deboned and diced | 1 tablespoon onion flakes |
| 2 stalks of thinly sliced celery | 1 pkg. Alphabet pasta |
| 2 thinly sliced long carrots | 2-4 14 oz. cans chicken broth (depending on the thickness of soup you prefer) |
| 2 large chicken bouillon cubes | |

Debone chicken and put skin and carcass into a Dutch oven, add 4 to 5 cups water and cook about 30 minutes. Remove skin and carcass and discard. Add carrots, celery, onion flakes, bouillon cubes, chicken broth, and diced chicken to broth in Dutch oven. Bring to a full boil and then lower heat and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes. Add pasta and continue to cook for another 10 minutes. Salt and Pepper to taste and garnish with fresh or dried parsley flakes. Good served with hard crusty rolls and chocolate pudding. Serves 4 to 6.

Nancy Robinson, North Platte, Nebraska

Hamburger Cornbread Casserole

- | | |
|--|---|
| 2 lbs. hamburger | 1/2 teaspoon baking soda |
| 1 large onion, diced | 1/2 teaspoon ground red pepper |
| 4-6 Jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped | 1 cup milk |
| 2 pkg. Jiffy Corn Bread – muffin mix (8 1.2 oz.) | 1/2 cup Canola oil |
| 1 can (14 3/4 oz.) cream–style corn | 2 eggs, beaten |
| 1/2 teaspoon salt | 3-4 cups cheddar cheese or Mexican Style cheese |

In large skillet, cook hamburger, onion, and peppers over medium heat until the meat is no longer pink, and drain very well, set aside. In a medium bowl beat eggs with a whisk, add corn bread mix, salt, baking soda, milk, red pepper and oil, beat with a spoon until not lumpy, add corn and stir into mixture. Pour about half of the corn bread into greased 9" x 13" x 2" baking dish. Top with half of the cheese, then the meat mixture, the remaining cheese. Then carefully spread the remaining cornbread over the top of the cheese. Bake uncovered, in 350 degree oven for 40 to 45 minutes, or until toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Let set for 5 minutes, cut into pieces, serve.

Jeni Sprague, Madison, Nebraska

Cherry Pie Bars

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1 cup butter | 2 21 oz. cherry pie filling cans (or whatever filling desired) |
| 2 cups sugar | |
| 1 tsp. salt | |
| 3 cups flour | Glaze: |
| 4 eggs | 1 cup powdered sugar |
| 1 tsp. almond extract | 1/2 tsp. vanilla |
| 1 tsp. vanilla | 2-3 tsps. milk |

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cream together butter, sugar and salt until fluffy. Add eggs one at a time and mix. Add extracts. Gradually add flour. Spread 3 cups of the dough on a 15 x 10 x 1 pan. Spread pie filling on top of dough. Drop remaining dough over filling. Bake 30-35 mins. Let cool. Mix up glaze and drizzle over bars.

Diane O'Donnell, Cozad, Nebraska

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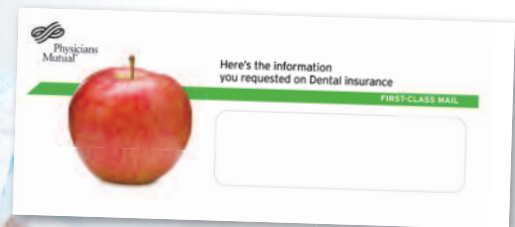
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Qualification: Advertised price requires credit qualification and 24-month commitment. Upfront activation and/or receiver upgrade fees may apply based on credit qualification. Offer ends 7/14/21. 2-Year Commitment: Early termination fee of \$20/mo. remaining applies if you cancel early. Included in 2-year price guarantee at \$59.99 advertised price: America's Top 120 programming package, local channels, HD service fees, and Hopper Duo Smart DVR for 1 TV. Included in 2-year price guarantee for additional cost: Programming package upgrades (\$79.99 for AT120+, \$89.99 for AT200, \$99.99 for AT250), monthly fees for upgraded or additional receivers (\$5-\$7 per additional TV, receivers with additional functionality may be \$10-\$15). Regional Sports: RSN Surcharge up to \$3/mo. applies to AT120+ and higher packages and varies based on location. NOT included in 2-year price guarantee or advertised price (and subject to change): Taxes & surcharges, add-on programming (including premium channels), DISH Protect, and transactional fees. Premium Channels: 3 Mos. Free: After 3 mos., you will be billed \$30/mo. for Showtime, Starz, and DISH Movie Pack unless you call or go online to cancel. Remote: The DISH Voice Remote with the Google Assistant requires internet-connected Hopper, Joey, or Wally device. Customer must press Voice Remote button to activate feature. The Google Assistant Smart Home features require Google account and compatible devices. Google is a trademark of Google LLC. Other: Netflix streaming membership required. All packages, programming, features, and functionality and all prices and fees not included in price lock are subject to change without notice. After 6 mos., if selected, you will be billed \$9.99/mo. for DISH Protect Silver unless you call to cancel. After 2 years, then-current everyday prices for all services apply. For business customers, additional monthly fees may apply. Free standard professional installation only. Indiana C.P.D Reg. No. - 19-08615. ©2021 GoDISH.com. All rights reserved. Internet speeds, prices, and providers vary by customer address. \$40 price refers to widely available plan from multiple providers. Restrictions apply. Nationwide availability of 25 Mbps plan is subject to change without notice. The application of "Unlimited Data with no Hard Data Limits" varies by provider, but commonly mean that your access to the internet will not be stopped by going over a data limit, but that speeds may be lowered. Call for details. Internet not provided by DISH and will be billed separately.