

North Central's News

Delivering a difference to parts of Knox, Antelope, Pierce, and Holt Counties Since 1945



Thoughts and Comments from General Manager, Keith E. Harvey

Cleaning up a few dust bunnies

This month I would like to clear a few things off of my desk while hopefully enlightening you on current issues within the electric industry. Not too long ago in one of my newsletter articles I discussed the importance of rare earth metals as we move further down the path of renewal energy

and electric cars. I mentioned that China currently has a de facto monopoly on these elements and could and has used them for leverage in trade disagreements (ask Germany about how this works). These rare earths are so named because at the time that they were discovered it was believed that they were indeed rare in amount and distribution. Actually they are distributed all over the world – sort of like tossing a hand full of sand at the earth. The problem is that they

only occur in a very few places in large enough quantities to mine. The good news is that just such a place exists in the Mojave Desert about an hour outside of Las Vegas.

Molycorp is mining its Mountain Pass facility again after a ten year hiatus extracting concentrated ore that holds 15 rare earth elements. The price of these elements has increased by 500% over the last year. This company has

continued to page 3

Irrigation Load Control Information

The irrigation load control hours for the 2011 irrigation season will remain the same as past years. Load control can take place Monday through Saturday for up to 13 hours. Wells could be controlled as early as 8:30 a.m. and released as late as 11:30 p.m. on these days as called for by Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) our wholesale power supplier. There is also a potential for up to seven hours of control on Sundays.

Following is an example of how a particular load control day may take place: North Central will receive a message from NPPD that we are subject to load control starting at 9:00 a.m. If North Central demand is above the designated threshold we will begin shedding irrigation loads as early as 8:30 a.m. to bring our demand down by 9:00 a.m. Load control will continue to be in effect until 9:00 p.m. or until we receive a release message from NPPD. Once North Central receives a release message from NPPD irrigation well(s) that are being controlled will be released at that designated release time and depending on your control switch and irrigation system

it can take up to 15 or more minutes to be released.

North Central's notification options about the potential control hours will once again be available. We offer three different notification options. They are:

- ▶ the Irrigation Hot Line 402-358-7025, which provide up to the minute daily load control information, plus the weekly load control forecast;
- ▶ North Central's web site www.nccpd.com under "Demand Waiver Status" or
- ▶ a service called Web Link (which provides individual well control information through the Internet or by receiving a text message to a cell phone). Customers who would

like to access their individual well's control information through the Web Link service will need to notify Sherrie at the office to sign up for this free service. All three options will be updated daily and will provide up to date information.

In May, irrigation customers will receive a letter with their individual well's specific load control schedule information. The location number, legal description, control schedule information and control number will be provided.

If you are new to North Central's irrigation load control procedures and have questions we encourage you to contact our office with any questions.

Have you upgraded your irrigation system?

Irrigation customers who have replaced an existing irrigation system with a new system are asked to notify our office as our irrigation technician will need to install a load control switch on the new system. Please have available the meter number and the location number or legal description where the new system was installed when you notify our office. Customers are reminded that the load control switch that was installed on the old irrigation system is the property of North Central and needs to be returned.

Radon testing necessary in homes in Nebraska

Testing in the state continues to indicate that Nebraska has a high prevalence of radon gas in homes. Of over 70,000 tests conducted since 1990, 57 percent have been above acceptable health levels, according to the North Central District Health Department's web site and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

The EPA-set health standard for radon is 4 picocuries per liter of air, although even exposure to lower levels may raise a person's risk. The average level of picocuries in homes and other buildings across the state is 5.9 picocuries.

"The data supports what we've known for some time", said Sara Morgan, Indoor Air Quality Program Manager. "Nebraska homes are very likely to have high levels of radon"

Radon is a colorless, odorless, naturally occurring gas that originates

in the soil and builds to dangerous levels in homes. Since it is radioactive, it is very damaging to lung tissue when people breathe it in. EPA estimates that approximately 21,000 lung cancer deaths per year are due to radon exposure.

According to Chief Medical Officer Dr. Joann Schaefer, lung cancer is usually a fatal illness and people should reduce their risk as much as possible, and radon testing is the first step.

On the Nebraska Radon Program web site (<http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/radon/>) new maps show radon averages across the state, as well as separate county maps which show radon averages at the zip code level.

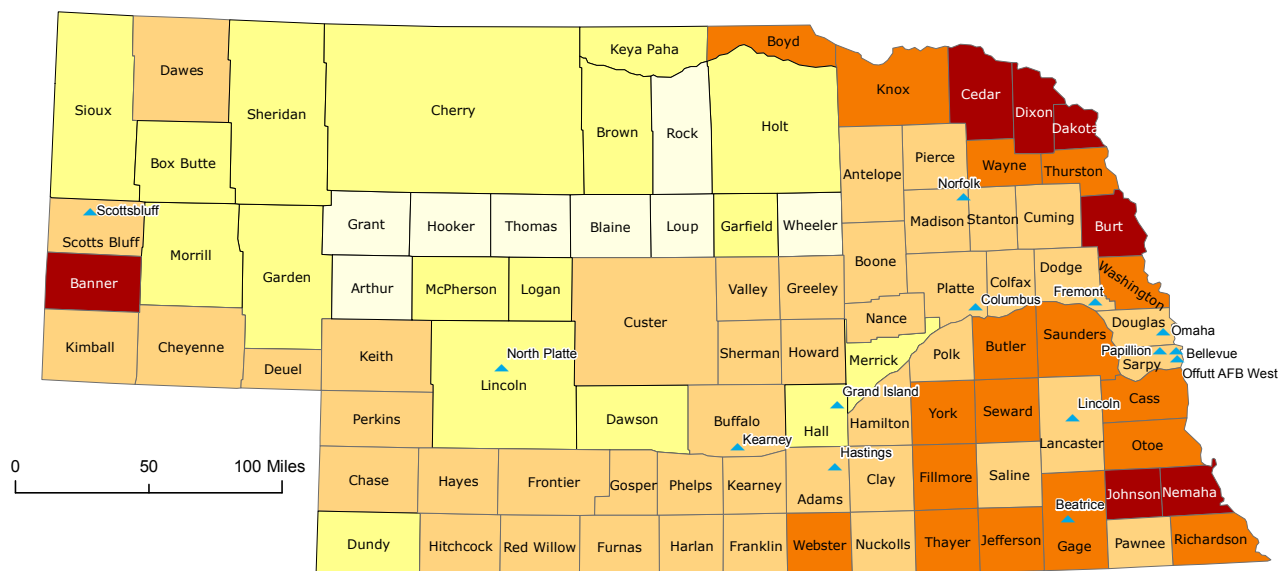
"The maps are not a predictor of what radon level an individual home will have," Morgan said. "Even counties with low averages have some homes with high radon levels. Likewise, some high average counties have homes with low

radon levels. Your neighbor's radon level is not an indication of what your radon level will be, so each homeowner needs to test."

The Nebraska Radon Program can provide homeowners with a low cost radon test kit, interpret the test results and explain the mitigation system. To purchase a short term radon test kit for \$5 or a long-term radon test kit for \$15, send a check or money order with your name and mailing address to: Nebraska Radon Program, 301 Centennial Mall South, PO Box 95026, Lincoln, NE 68509.

North Central PPD provided the story about radon testing as a public service. NCPPD does not conduct radon testing or install mitigation systems.

Nebraska Radon Testing Results By County All Radon Test Data through 12/2009



Legend

▲ Cities with >10,000 population

Average Radon Level (pCi/L)

- 0.2 - 1.9
- 2.0 - 3.9
- 4.0 - 7.9
- 8.0 - 9.9
- 10.0 - 19.9

This map is not intended to be used to determine if a home in a given area should be tested for radon. Homes with elevated levels of radon have been found in all areas of the state. All homes should be tested regardless of geographic location.

Statewide

Number of Tests Conducted - 70,001
 Number of Tests \geq 4 pCi/L - 39,739
 Percent of Tests \geq 4 pCi/L - 57%
 Highest Result - 203.0 pCi/L



Map created by: DHHS GIS - 11/10

Cleaning up

continued from page 1

improved mining techniques that allow it to extract twice as many of these rare earth elements from the same amount of ore used ten years ago. And they can do this in a much more environmentally sensitive manner. By the end of 2011 MolyCorp hopes to be mining 5,000 metric tons annually and by 2013 they hope to boost production to 40,000 metric tons annually which is about 30% of the market. This is good news and goes to show once again how good American know-how and the free market system work if left alone by government regulations.

Albert Einstein was once asked to explain his theory of relativity in layman terms. This was his response: "When you are courting a nice girl an hour seems like a second. When you sit on a red-hot cinder a second seems like an hour. That's relativity." This same problem of relativity is what plagues and perplexes many electric customers in the United States. About 90% of all electric customers in the U.S. have higher electric rates than Nebraskans. When electric rates increase in Nebraska there are many customers that think that the new rates are unjustified and outrageous. Now if we charge these same rates to someone in California then they believe that they have received a massive rate decrease and are overjoyed. Now on the flip side of this coin if Nebraskans were to get a rate increase to match the rates in California or any of many other states they would probably have a heart attack and call for the removal of every person associated with the power districts. Same rates – different people – totally different reactions. That's relativity. This state has some very good electric rates that are a result of public power. However, rates will continue to climb as more expensive generation is placed on the grid and the government continues to add regulation on top of regulation. Relatively speaking Nebraska electric rates will continue to be some of the lowest in the country so cheer up because things could be a whole lot worse.

Finally a few words about nuclear power and using it into the future. Let me start by saying that the incident in

Japan is serious and heart-wrenching and there is no way to down-play the horrible significance of what has happened there. The problem is that there is no perfect energy for the generation of electricity and there is always a trade-off between the positives and negatives of any given energy source. Since electricity is the foundation of our modern society and standard of living it is important to remember that not only must an energy source be safe and cost effective but must also be reliable and twenty four hours a day and 365.25 days every year. Wind and solar are safer but will never be effective for base load generation. Coal and natural gas are more dangerous but are the best solution in a non-constrained greenhouse gas emission world. And if natural gas is used to "follow" wind – ramp up when wind is low and ramp down when wind is up – then it becomes just as major a GHG emitter as coal. Geothermal is a minor player because of the litany of safety errors associated with super-heated steam and corrosive dissolved minerals and gases.

An interesting bit of information about an 810 MW plant (Cooper Nuclear Station) is that it uses up about six pounds of uranium oxide daily (about the size of a deck of cards). This six pounds of uranium oxide produces as much energy as 20 million pounds of coal; 165 million cubic feet of natural gas or one million gallons of oil. Then too Cooper has three depths of redundancy with regards to the restoration of on-site power; is designed to withstand a 6.0 Richter Scale earthquake; is built to handle up to 300 mph winds that could accompany a tornado and is built 13 feet above the 100 year flood plain level. Whatever mix of fuels is ultimately chosen it will have to include a variety of fuels with different good and bad attributes but which will, when taken together, provide for reliability and safety at the lowest possible price.

Have a great month and keep safety at the forefront in whatever you may be doing.

From our homes to yours . . .

Tried & Tasted Delicacies

Early Riser Casserole

- 1 1/2 c ham, lean, chopped
- 1 c sausage, lean, cooked and drained
- 1/4 c green peppers, chopped
- 1/4 c green onion, chopped
- 1/4 c. red pepper, chopped
- 3/4 to 1 c mushrooms, chopped
- 1 - 1 1/4 c broccoli, chopped
- 3 to 4 c shredded hash browns
- 2 Roma tomatoes, chopped
- 18 eggs, whipped with milk
- 1 c low fat milk

Whip the eggs with the milk. Combine all the ingredients and pour into a 9x13 greased casserole. Bake at 350 degrees for 50-60 minutes or until set in the center and lightly browned.

Pancakes

- 1 egg
- 1 1/2 c milk
- 1/2 tsp vanilla
- 1 tbs. butter
- 1 tbs. sugar
- 1 tbs. baking powder
- pinch salt
- 1 to 2 c flour

Melt the butter and let cool, slightly. Beat in the egg. Add the milk, vanilla, sugar and salt and mix well. Add the baking powder, mix. Add the flour slowly until the desired thickness has been reached. A little lumpy is okay. Fry the cakes and enjoy topped as you like.



1409 Main St • PO Box 90 • Creighton, NE 68729-0090
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For Sale: Blue Spruce trees 4’-7’ tall, dug with tree spade, excellent quality. Please call 402-893-2113.

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For Sale: Double bunk bed with storage area underneath. Please call 402-847-3274.

For Sale: Brown rocker recliner in excellent condition - \$75. Please call 402-288-4266.

For Sale: Adult riding saddle in good condition - \$100. Please call 402-847-3301.

For Sale: Hoosier style Kitch cabinet - \$125; No. 60 Dazey butter churn - \$80. Please call 402-668-2821.

Do you have something to sell or are you looking for something in particular? You can call, send or email (bargain.barn@ncppd.net) your description of what’s for sale or what you are looking for into our office. We will run the ad in the Bargain Barn section free for one month. Please include name and telephone number. No commercial ads will be accepted, personal items only.

Meter Reading Reminder for Rural Customers

Meter readings for rural residential and commercial services should be submitted into North Central’s office between **April 20 and 28, 2011**

Meter Readings can be submitted by:

- Phone - **402-358-5112 or 800-578-1060**
- Electronically - **www.ncppd.com** or Email - **ncentral@ncppd.net**

Accounts without a meter reading at end of month billing will be subject to the \$20 Estimated Meter Reading Fee

RURAL CONSUMERS please read your meter between the 20th and the 28th. If you are calling your meter reading(s) into our office use our local or toll free “800” telephone number. If you call after our normal business hours 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, you may leave your reading on our answering service. To submit your meter reading electronically log onto our web site at www.ncppd.com and click Submit Your Meter Readings. You can also email your meter readings into our office by using the following email address - ncentral@ncppd.net. If you are unable to call your meter reading(s) into our office, you can mail your readings into our office by the date listed above.

Town meters are read by North Central PPD personnel.