

# 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*

**“Common sense is very uncommon.”** -- Horace Greeley

In browsing through the myriad articles, white papers, magazines and other information that finds its way

to my desk during the course of a month I have noticed what seems to be a media

push for the federal government to enact a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). A RPS occurs whenever a governmental legislative body passes a law (which is signed by the Executive Branch of the government) that mandates that a certain percentage of electricity generation must come from renewable sources and usually by some specific date in the future. These

laws are mostly based on the uneducated whims of legislators who have been listening to Chicken Little about the sky falling rather than on the physics and economics of the real world – but they are the law. Many states have already enacted such standards that range from 0% in 17 states (including Nebraska) to

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## *Carol Schwanebeck retires after more than 3 decades of service*

On May 6, 2011, Billing Supervisor, Carol Schwanebeck retired after providing over three decades of service at North Central PPD. Carol began her employment at North Central on November 13, 1973

in the billing department. Over the years she has performed many different duties such as processing health insurance claims, assisting with accounts payable, posting meter readings and customer payments, assisting customers with billing or service inquiries, and assisting with irrigation load control. However, her primary duty was over-seeing the monthly billing process for North Central.

Sherrie Zimmerer a co-work of Carol's said, “We are losing a great wealth of knowledge and experience as she retires. I have worked with Carol for 27 years and when I started working here as a billing clerk, Carol and I shared an office together and she is the one who trained me and taught me the ropes. There have been four general managers in the history of the district and she has worked for all of them. She may be the first and only employee who has done this.”

Carol was recognized for her years of service at a small get together and she was presented with some retirement gifts. Attending the get together were her husband Larry, the employees and three directors, Brent Stagemeyer, Gordon Fulton and Bill Jedlicka. During her retirement she plans to spend time with her husband Larry and at-

tend as many of her grandchildren's events as she can. She also plans to spend time on the golf course maybe getting in 18 holes; gardening in the summer; going to baseball games and baking cookies. She is well known for making delicious homemade cookies, so we are hoping she stops by the office to visit and maybe bring some of her freshly baked cookies.

The staff, employees and directors at North Central wish Carol the best in her retirement and thank her for her dedicated service (over 37 years).



*Carol Schwanebeck retires with over 37 years of service at North Central PPD.*



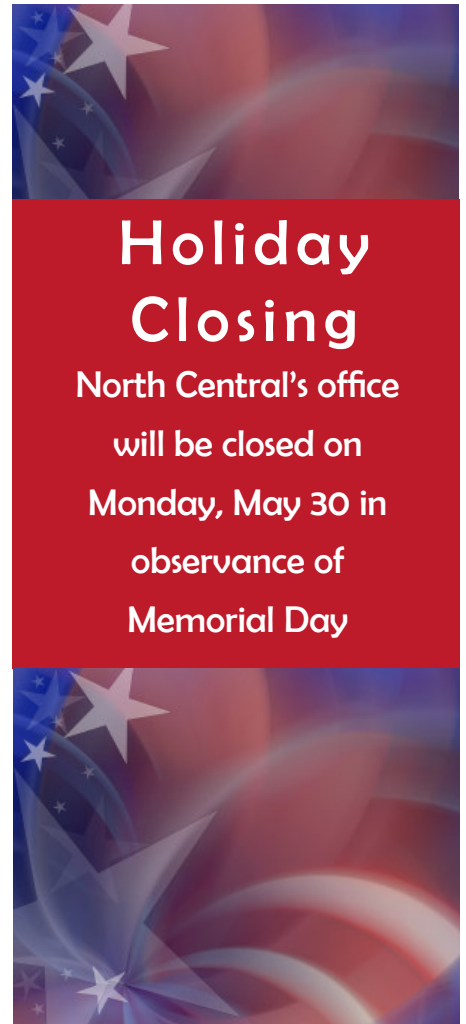
*Carol Schwanebeck is being presented with a retirement gift from co-worker Sherrie J. Zimmerer.*

# Budget billing service available

Budget billing is a great way to help you budget your electric energy costs each month. Your monthly budget is determined by averaging your last 12 months of billing; times a factor determined by the District. Any lighting is added to the budget amount. New budget customers are required to have good credit to participate in the budget program. Generally once a year your account will be reviewed to make sure the budget amount is neither too much nor too little. In



the review month the account will be reconciled to assure the customer that the correct amount of budget is being charged. If the budget amount needs to be adjusted you will be contacted. Budget Billing is a free service that helps you by making your monthly payments predictable. If you have any questions regarding your budget settle-up, please contact our office at 402-358-5112 or 800-578-1060 or by email at [ncentral@ncppd.net](mailto:ncentral@ncppd.net).



**Holiday Closing**  
North Central's office  
will be closed on  
Monday, May 30 in  
observance of  
Memorial Day

## 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.

## Please help us help you!

Do we have your most updated phone number to reach you by? There are times when we need to contact customers about service problems, meter reading reminders, billing questions, planned power outages or safety issues and it's much easier when we have a home or

cell phone number on file. More and more customers are using cell phones for their primary phone service. If this is your case, please contact our office with your current contact number or complete the following form and return it along with your next payment. The follow-

ing form will also be included with your June billing statement. Please take a few minutes to complete the form providing us with current home phone number, cell phone number, email address and mailing address.



### Please help us keep updated contact information for your account

Name (as it appears on your bill) \_\_\_\_\_

Home telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Is this your primary phone?  Yes  No

Work Phone (daytime) \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

You can mail this insert with your bill payment or drop it off at our office. You can also email your information to us at [ncentral@gpcom.net](mailto:ncentral@gpcom.net) or call in the information during business hours!

# “Cooling System Tuneups”



While April showers bring May flowers, and May flowers bring passage into the start of summer (or pilgrims if you are a smart-alecky third-grader), the start of summer brings another season of air-conditioning usage.

While any time is better than never, spring to early summer is the ideal time to tuneup your air-conditioning or heat pump system. Early system maintenance can prevent minor problems from becoming more expensive problems later on. Furthermore, if your tuneup is scheduled early, you will beat the long waits and higher prices that come with peak season visits from your HVAC repairman.

There are two main reasons to schedule an air-conditioning or heat pump system tuneup with your HVAC contractor: saving money and saving money. First, you greatly increase the odds that your contractor will catch small problems before they become big ones. Something like a small refrigerant leak should not cost much more than the service call to repair. However, having to purchase a new compressor, when low refrigerant levels burn out your current one, can cost a thousand dollars or more.

The second way an annual tuneup saves you money is by ensuring that your unit is working at optimal efficiency. A well-tuned system uses less energy to cool your house, and lower energy use means bigger savings for you on your monthly utility bills.

A system tuneup is an important part of making sure you get long lasting and efficient performance over the life of your equipment. Here is a short list of common maintenance procedures your HVAC contractor should include with a

## IMPORTANT MESSAGE

For **Nebraska Rural TV** Customers!!

Over the past 13 years, Nebraska Rural TV, Inc. has been proud to be a local DIRECTV service provider in your area, and we have worked hard to provide you and your neighbors with high quality customer service. During that time, DIRECTV has added new programming packages and popular channels based on customer feedback to provide you with the best available television service. In addition, DIRECTV has launched advanced products such as High-Definition programming and Digital Video Recorders to enhance your television experience.

We are sending you this letter to let you know that DIRECTV will now begin providing you with billing and customer care services directly in addition to delivering your DIRECTV programming. This transition will occur on July 15th, 2011.

While we will miss servicing your DIRECTV account and aiding you in resolving hardware issues, we are very confident that you will continue to enjoy your DIRECTV programming and that DIRECTV will provide you with excellent customer service.

### HERE IS WHAT THIS CHANGE MEANS TO YOU:

1. Beginning on July 15, 2011, DIRECTV will automatically begin providing all services related to your DIRECTV service. **YOUR DIRECTV PROGRAMMING WILL BE UNAFFECTED DURING THE TRANSITION.**
2. Please note that from this date onwards, your DIRECTV bill will list a new payment address. Please mail your bills to the new address, not us. If you use electronic checks or a debit card, you will want to update your bank with the new address.
3. Please contact DIRECTV at 1-800-531-5000 or visit them at [www.directv.com](http://www.directv.com) for all your future DIRECTV programming and service needs.
4. **Your DIRECTV bill and your monthly electric bill can no longer be paid with one check as your DIRECTV bill will be sent to a new address.**

Again, it has been a pleasure to be your local DIRECTV service provider.

routine tuneup:

- ✓ Perform a visual inspection of your system.
- ✓ Check for proper refrigerant levels.
- ✓ Clean the outside compressor unit coil.
- ✓ Check the indoor coil.
- ✓ Blow out the drain line.
- ✓ Check belts and lubricate motors, if needed.
- ✓ Check, clean, and/or replace filters and discuss a replacement schedule.
- ✓ Discuss proper system operation and proper temperature set-back.

Typically tuneups on cooling systems that have been neglected for a few years can provide 5-15 percent energy savings, or more. While a tuneup every year can help optimize your system's efficiency, you may be eligible for a \$30 EnergyWiseSM incentive every three years to help offset the cost of a tuneup. Visit with our Energy Advisor, Linda Sokol to see if you qualify.

Don't spring into this summer without considering your cooling system! A tuneup may be all you need to ensure a cool and comfortable place to escape heat this summer!

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## Common sense

*continued from page 1*

108 MW Megawatts (MW) in Iowa to 33% of all electricity purchased in California by 2030. Common sense should dictate that as any nation looks to acquire a certain percent of its electricity from renewable sources it would consider all possible forms of renewal energy. As I have mentioned before when I taught Ecology and Earth Science at the high school and college levels I always found hydroelectric power in my text books listed as a renewable energy source. However, our lawmakers at the state level and likely at the federal level have decided that hydroelectric power does not count towards fulfilling any renewable portfolio standard. Another way of saying this is that the government has decided along with the powerful environment and renewable energy lobbying groups that wind energy, solar, geothermal and methane digesters should be subsidized without the competition from something that is already built; is far more realistic for what the people need from renewable power; and could be expanded and retrofitted to be an even more valuable resource.

The US Energy Information Administration publishes on its website the most recent data on generation resources and the percentage of US power supply met by each of several different generation fuel types. In January, 2011 petroleum accounted for 0.9% of US electricity sales; nuclear 20.0%; natural gas 20.4%; coal 47.1%; hydro 7.1% and other (wind, solar, etc) 4.5%. If a person were to think logically and I dare say used some common sense, he or she would probably figure out that if you added the hydro to the “other” you would get a true picture of renewable energy in the U.S. as currently standing at 11.6% of total generation. With this in mind perhaps the consumers in this country could stop beating themselves up over our lack of commitment to renewable energy. This whole idea of not including hydroelectric generation in the renewable energy percentage is like telling a boxer that the next time he fights he will not be able to use his best punch – a left jab – as it has recently been classified by some bureaucrat in some cubicle somewhere as no longer being considered a punch. Obviously this is being done so that this fighter

will be put at a disadvantage as compared to a fighter who doesn't use a left jab as much. It's a great plan for shoving a less cost effective way of generating electricity right up the taxpayers' collective noses in order to direct billions of dollars in subsidies towards “pet” projects. Basically it's politics as usual.

An article in *The New York Times* that caught my attention said that the electric car “has long been recognized as the ideal solution” because it “is cleaner and quieter” and “much more economical” than a gasoline powered vehicle.<sup>1</sup> Oh dear – I see that this article was written back on November 12, 1911. And through the years since 1911 the all-electric vehicle has always been the next best thing and has always been just beyond our reach. There are reasons for this situation and I'd like to discuss them with you. Remember that I am talking about all-electric cars – not hybrids that use both fossil fuels and electricity for propulsion. The biggest problem at least from my perspective is the low energy density of batteries in watt-hours per kilogram (2.2 pounds to a kilogram for those of you who don't deal in the metric system). Modern lithium-ion batteries are a vast improvement over the old lead-acid predecessors with a four-fold improvement in energy density. The problem here is that gasoline has 80 times as many watt-hours per kilogram as does the lithium-ion batteries. Even ethanol has more than 50 times as many. This means that to achieve the total energy found in a tank of gasoline the size and weight of the batteries would be and is too great for serious consideration. Thus much better storage batteries must be created before a workable, mass market model of an all-electric car can be built and sold on a large scale.

A second problem with all electric cars is their long refueling times as compared with conventional gasoline. The Tesla, a high end all-electric car, takes 240 minutes to replenish its 53-kilowatt-hour battery pack that weighs 992 pounds or about one-third of the curb weight of the vehicle. It takes at most a couple or three minutes to refuel with gasoline that is the equivalent of about 600-kilowatt-hours of electricity (11 times the energy contained in the battery pack) and in about 1/120th of the time. Of course the cost of filling a car with 18 gallons of gasoline is about \$72.00 today which is significant as compared to maybe \$5.30 for the electricity to

charge the batteries. This too will change as more and more hybrids and electric cars make their inevitable move to America's highways. Why? This will happen for the same reason that a gallon of gasoline or diesel or whatever has a big chunk of taxes built into the fuel price – the money to maintain and expand the highway infrastructure has to come from somewhere. If things continue on in their current direction someday soon there will be an extra tax or toll for owning an electric or hybrid vehicle because they still need roads and bridges and traffic lights and on and on ad nauseum (there are places in the U.S. already looking at such a fee on hybrid vehicles). Just remember the simple truth that I keep repeating in my columns – there are no free lunches. “I guess every form of refuge has its price.”<sup>2</sup>

Finally another amazing bit of information has presented itself in the form of a 2009 analysis by the National Academy of Sciences concerning the environmental impacts of an all-electric car. The study is called “Hidden Costs of Energy: Unpriced Consequences of Energy Production and Use”. It was authored by the Committee on Health, Environmental, and Other External Costs and Benefits of Energy Production and Consumption (this is the real name); and the National Research Council – and it is 455 pages of interesting data which I hope to digest and bring to you at a later date in a short but accurate synopsis. We shall see – perhaps all that glitters with all-electric cars is not gold and perhaps the silver-lining is more like some type of caustic substance – and again maybe not.

At this point it is time for me conclude this edition of my newsletter and to implore each of you to live safely since you have so many things going on at the same time in your lives. Slow down and smell the flowers or coffee of whatever – and take time to insure that everything you do has been considered from a safety standpoint. And while you are busy with your lives – we will harness that magic genie – electricity and deliver it reliably to you when and where you depend on it. Have a great month!

<sup>1</sup>New York Times, “Foreign Trade in Electric Vehicles,” November 12, 1911, C8.

<sup>2</sup>“Lyin' Eyes”, Eagles, lyrics by Don Henley and Glenn Frey, 1975.



Linda Sokol, Energy Advisor

## Electrical safety program presented at area schools

Before I started working here at North Central Public Power District I never really thought about Electrical Safety. I learned (from my husband who is an electrician) the precautions that needed to be taken when working with electricity, but I really didn't know the harm that could come to someone that was just going through a normal day.

One of my jobs at North Central is to accompany Assistant Operations Manager Todd Zimmerer to the local schools to present an Electrical Safety Program for the 4th and 5th grader classes. The safety presentation includes the classes watching a video called "The Shocking Truth", then Todd shows them a linemen's belt with all the equipment that linemen use for safety and he then explains to the kids the dangers of electricity.

The highlight of the presentation is when Todd shows the class North Central energized farm display which he uses to show what could happen if you were to come into contact with an energized power line while climbing a ladder or working with large farm equipment. With the energized farm set, Todd can simulate with Mr. Hotdog what could happen if someone or something came in contact with an energized power line. This is a real eye opener for the kids when he creates an electrical arch using the hotdog as part of the electrical circuit. We hope that the kids learn in this safety program stays with them so if they are ever in a situation where electrical wires are present they will remember what to or not to do. The students are then given the opportunity to enter a poster into an electrical safety poster contest. Four \$50 savings bonds will be awarded in this contest. The winners will be published in next month's newsletter.

This year we went to Orchard, Verdigre, Creighton, St. Ludger's, Niobrara and Plainview elementary schools. If you have a 4th or 5th grade child that attends one of the schools, please ask them about the program. If any family wants information on Electrical Safety please let me know.



Todd Zimmerer is showing a student how much a linemen's belt actually weighs with all their tools in it.



Todd Zimmerer is shown presenting the electrical safety program while using the scaled down model of an energized farm display, while Linda Sokol watches.

From our homes to yours . . .

## Tried & Tasted Delicacies

### Monkey Bread

- 18 Rhodes Dinner Rolls, frozen
- 1 3-oz. box butterscotch pudding (the kind you cook, not instant)
- 1/2 c butter
- 1/2 c brown sugar
- 2 tbls. cinnamon

Spray Bundt pan generously with Pam. Place frozen rolls evenly on the bottom of the pan.

Melt butter in saucepan. Mix in remaining ingredients. Pour mixture over rolls in pan and cover with sprayed foil.

Then cover with towel and let rise overnight.

Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. To remove bread from pan, turn over pan onto serving plate.



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## The Bargain Barn

**For Sale:** 40 gallon pull type Bomgaars sprayer. Like new \$275. Please call 402-360-2034.

**For Sale:** Motor guide electric trolling motor, brand new, foot control 54 lbs. thrust motor. Please call 402-841-2242.

**Give Away:** Chives and winter onion plants. Also chicken wire of various lengths - good for gardens. Please call 402-841-4124.

**For Sale:** 15,000 watt Power take off generator on cart. Please call 402-582-4296.

**For Sale:** 41" round kitchen table with maple legs and four maple chairs, one leaf, and a formica top - \$125. Antique weneer walnut burl buffet, 60 inches wide x 20 inches deep - make offer. Please call 402-842-2755.

**Wanted:** Two row machinery that will fit a Farmall International A or B tractor. Please call 402-375-8959.

Do you have something to sell or are you looking for something in particular? You can call, send or email (bargainbarn@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:



**May 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](http://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](mailto: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.