



Polk County Rural Public Power District

*"Committed to enhancing the lives of our
customers by providing safe, reliable,
economical energy now and into the future."*

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



January 2015

Volume 15 Number 1

PO Box 465

115 W 3rd St., Stromsburg NE 68666

(402) 764-4381

You're Not Alone in the Dark

Electricity powers our lives. We depend on it for nearly everything we do. So we understand how frustrating it can be when you're left in the dark.

Power outages are never convenient. It takes a lot of hands to keep your power on, and even more hands to get it up and running when an outage occurs. Polk County Rural Public Power District works hard to restore your electric service when outages occur, but there are necessary steps to take to ensure that power is restored to the majority of customers as quickly, and *safely*, as possible.

After a major storm, Polk County RPPD line crews must identify which towers, poles and lines have incurred damage. Very rarely, but occasionally, in the case of a major storm such as a tornado, wind or ice storm transmission towers can be damaged. If that is the case, hundreds of customers could be affected. Repairing damage to transmission lines is a top priority when it comes to restoring power.

High voltage transmission stations feed power to Polk County RPPD's seven distribution substations. These substations serve hundreds of customers. If there is no damage done to transmission towers, the local distribution substations are checked. If the issue is isolated and can be resolved

at the substation level, great! That means hundreds of people can get their power restored at once.

At times, the issue cannot be isolated to one of our distribution substations. If that is the case, Polk County RPPD crews inspect distribution lines between the substations and the meters they serve. If the distribution lines can be repaired, power can be restored to the towns and homes those lines serve, as long as there is no damage to the tap lines.

Tap lines carry power to the transformers located underground or connected to poles outside of homes and other buildings. Polk County Rural Public Power District line crews identify which damaged lines to work first based on which lines will restore power to the greatest number of customers.

Many times, the issue is resolved once the tap lines are repaired. But, have you ever lost power only to look next door and see the lights still blazing from your neighbor's window? When this happens, it generally means that the service line between your home and the nearby transformer has been damaged. If this happens, call the District right away so we can send a line crew to your home.

Power restoration can be a tricky

business, so if you lose service in your home or neighborhood please remember the following:

- Stay clear of downed power lines. Contact with these lines could be life threatening.
- Report the outage to Polk County RPPD at 402/764-4381 as soon as possible.
- Make sure to inform us if loss of power to your home affects life support systems or could cause any additional threat to health and safety.

We appreciate your patience and cooperation whenever an outage occurs.

Happy New Year!

Wishing everyone good
health and happiness in
the new year!



Fight the Winter Chills

January can be the coldest month of the winter. Frigid temperatures can cause heating systems to work over time, and since heating and cooling can make up nearly half of your electric bill, you may experience sticker shock when you open that bill. Instead of waiting until after a potentially high bill is in your mailbox, be proactive. There are things you can do now to help ensure you are managing your energy use and spending less.

These simple steps can help you manage your use:

1. Wrap exposed pipes and water heaters that are in unconditioned spaces.
2. Make sure to change your air filter every 30-60 days.
3. Keep drapes closed at night and keep those that don't get direct sunlight closed during the day, too.
4. Keep the fireplace damper closed when it is not in use. Keeping it open can bring cold air into the room.
5. Caulk around the fireplace hearth, and caulk or weather strip around doors and windows.
6. Dress for the weather, even if

you are inside. Wearing proper clothing like long sleeves and pants, or wrapping up in a cozy blanket will help combat the temptation of bumping up the thermostat.

Using the tips above can certainly help you manage your energy use, but your bill may still be higher than normal in winter months. Why?

The weather makes a big impact on electric bills, accounting for nearly half of your bill. Even those with the most efficient heating systems will see more use in extreme weather. When extreme cold temperatures hit, our heaters work overtime.

For example, even if you set your thermostat to our recommended 68 degrees in the winter, when it is 19 degrees outside, your system has to work hard to make up that 49 degree difference. Your heating system works harder and cycles on and off more often, making your use much higher. That means your bill will be much higher.

Remember, there is value in comfort. For us to be comfortable in our homes, our heaters are going to work harder, but it may be worth the additional cost to you.

Policy #428 - Billing Penalty and Fees

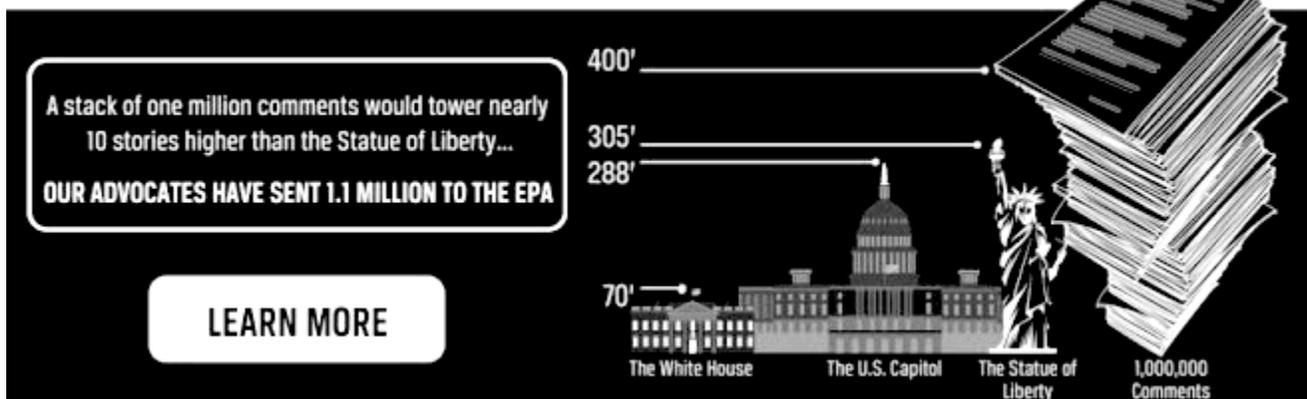
REMINDER -

SUMMARY BY FEE:

- Residential deposit: \$250.00
- Meter reading fee: \$20.00 per meter
- Penalties: \$10.00 for balance over \$30.00, plus 1.33% per month on account receivable balance
- Collection fee: \$40.00 per account
- Reconnection fee within 24 hours and during normal business hours \$60.00
- Reconnection fee beyond 24 hours and outside of normal business hours \$100.00
- Non-sufficient payment: \$20.00 per return
- Remember: A simple phone call can save you lots of money. If you receive a delinquent notice, please read the reverse side of the notice. One payment arrangement is acceptable per notice and must be kept!

Thank you to the nearly 1,700 customers who responded to the "Take Action" alert. You were part of the 1.1 million customers nationally who responded. Learn more at www.nreca.coop

THE POWER OF ONE MILLION COMMENTS



Regulations Mandate Changes For Some Customers Who Pay VIA Credit Cards

Four major credit card companies have developed security programs known as (PCI) Payment Card Industry compliance in efforts to better secure individual's financial information.

Polk County RPPD completed an analysis to determine what changes would be required to meet PCI standards. These standards deal with how our customer service representatives take and record payments of your confidential, financial information.

Customer Services Manager, Judy Rieken said, "Polk County RPPD utilizes the greatest security possible through our technology and software programs. Our integrity is important and we use the highest possible means

to protect the financial information of our customers."

The PCI objective is to basically take the employee and the customer "out of the loop" of recording any credit card data which reduces the possibility of fraudulent activity.

This year we took a small step forward when we removed the credit card payment options from the payment stub. This was not removed in error, but done to protect data between the time the mail left your box and arrives safely in our office. PCI does not want your card number traveling through the mail, thus being written on a payment stub.

Another change this past year was to migrate to a 'centralized payment

gateway' which securely transmits and stores credit card data through encryption methods which greatly minimizes security breaches.

How Do These Changes Affect You?

Shortly after the first of the year we will be implementing a secure payment program through Verifone to be used by all customers who currently call into our office to make a credit card payment. All the details have not been worked out at this time, but when you call in you will be directed to a pre-recorded list of payment options. You will be able to obtain account balances, make payments and store financial data for future use.

Heated Flooring, an Option for Toasty Toes

In-floor heating is most commonly used in a concrete or tile floor with high thermal mass, but some are specifically designed for carpeting, hardwood or laminate flooring.

In a concrete slab or under a tile floor, electric heating cable is laid in a serpentine pattern or nailed along the outer edges of the floor. For carpeting, thin mats or sheets embedded with electric cable are placed on the floor before the carpeting is laid.

WarmlyYours has a design with thin electric heating cables embedded in a strong fiberglass mesh. This is particularly effective for use under hardwood flooring and laminate. To avoid excessive drying of the wood, check with the flooring manufacturer about the maximum allowable temperature. Consider installing a special programmable thermostat with a laminate and engineered wood setting to protect the

materials.

One design by Heatizon uses a low-voltage heating mesh that is about 1/8" thick and is stapled directly to the sub-floor. WarmlyYours also

have to cover your entire house, or even an entire room, so you can add to the system as your budget allows. People sometimes add small custom-

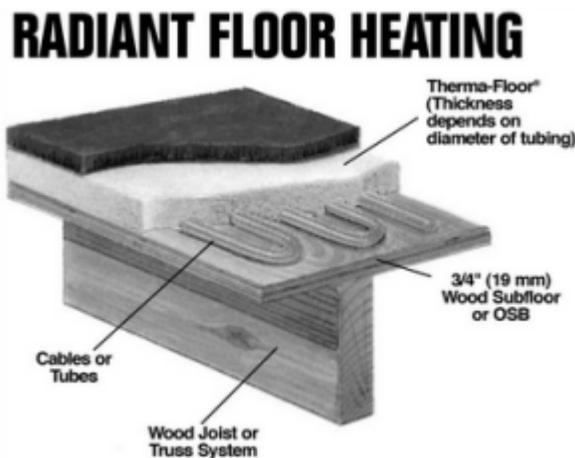
er mats or sheets in front of a work space to pinpoint heating needs. A 10-foot by 30-inch heating mat costs about \$200, and a matching programmable thermostat is about \$140.

This article is attribute of James Dulley.

Dulley is a nationally known author of "Sensible Home and Cut Your Utility Bills" columns for over 200 newspapers and magazines. He studied at Harvard University, has a M.B.A. in Industrial Management and a B.S.

in Mechanical Engineering.

For information about hundreds of other topics you can log on to Dulley's website at www.dulley.com



offers a wafer-thin heating kit, which is placed between the pad and the carpet.

With in-floor heating, you do not

Make Life Easier, Use E-Bill

E-Bill is one of the easiest ways to access your account information. You can make payments, submit meter readings and preview past billing history. When it comes to tax time, your payments are conveniently listed at the click of a mouse.

You also have the ability to enter, edit and control your financial accounts with which you will pay your bill. Once you enter your financial information it is securely encrypted and only the last four digits of the card will appear in our customer database. Allowable payments can be made by credit, debit and checking. You can also sign up for recurring payments through e-bill. Another nice feature is to track your monthly costs and consumption through graphs. Several people have commented on this feature to see how graphs flow in heating and cooling seasons. This really helps to understand how weather has an impact on the total monthly consumption. The choice is yours!

One last feature gives customers the ability, through customer contract submission, to inform us of service name, address and phone number changes. Customers use this feature to request service work such as yard light repairs, loose guy wires or trees hanging low into the power lines.

Please log on to: www.pcrppd.com to use this service. Newcomers to the site must first register by clicking the second bullet on the opening page. You will need the account number from your most recent statement. If you have any questions, please contact our office and we will be glad to lead you through the process and give you a mini tour of the services available to you.

Paying by Check?

Please do not staple your payment stub to the check. When a staple is removed, a slight tear may result and the check or stub may jam our processor. Also, please do not write checks in red ink. Most scanners do not read red ink. We thank you in advance for your cooperation which helps us promptly post payments to your account(s).

Seasonal Accounts Have Been Billed

The 2014 energy charge for all seasonal cabins, grain dryers, stock wells, etc. was billed December 20th. The 2014 billing becomes delinquent as of January 10th.

On January 20th the 2015 annual minimum bill will be charged. This balance is due upon receipt and becomes delinquent by February 10th, 2015.

Reminder, seasonal account holders receive these two, back to back billings annually.

There have not been any rate adjustments to these schedules since January 2013.



Keep your heating system running efficiently. Don't forget to check and change the filter if necessary.

IN COMPARISON TO OIL OR GAS FURNACES, ELECTRIC HEATING HAS MANY ADVANTAGES

Electric resistance heat

(i.e., energy-efficient space heaters, baseboard heating):



...is 100% efficient – every single Btu in a kilowatt-hour is delivered as usable heat.



...is quick to respond and can be very quiet.



...takes up less space in the house than other conventional systems *(assuming space heaters are used)*.



...can warm select rooms, allowing you to keep your main thermostat down while ensuring continued comfort.

Electric heating systems are:



...generally less expensive to purchase and install.



...safe because there is no combustion process. There is no chance of flames starting a fire or having combustion products contaminate the air.

