

# Polk County Power 'The Livewire'



  
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

PO Box 465 Stromsburg NE 68666

November 2018

## Importance of Reliable Electricity Essential to Public Power

Reliable electric service is a luxury we often take for granted. Unfortunately, we may not think about how important reliable energy supply is to us until we have to go without it, like during a severe storm. For Nebraska's public power providers, reliability has many components. Reliability is considered at every step of the electricity delivery process, from the point of generation to delivery into our homes and businesses. Reliability can be impacted by the different generation resources used, by the age and maintenance of utility infrastructure, by security concerns, and by the ability to deploy a trained workforce to restore power in the event of an outage.

Reliability begins by choosing the best generation resource for our system needs. Nebraska's generation mix is a diversified portfolio of resources which include coal (73 percent), nuclear (17 percent), natural gas (4 percent), hydroelectric (4 percent), and renewable resources (2 percent). Each of these generation resources provides its own positive and negative attributes, which can include cost considerations, environmental impact, and the availability of that resource. In regards to reliability, not every resource is created equally. Base load resources like coal, nuclear, natural gas, or hydroelectric power can run continuously and can be actively con-

trolled to follow load and meet consumer demand. Variable resources like wind and solar, however, rely on environmental conditions which can be hard to predict. As wind speeds vary or cloud cover changes, the electric output from these generation resources can fluctuate dramatically and in an unpredictable manner. This complicates an already difficult load-balancing process. Unfortunately, most power plants were not built to be continuously ramped up and down. Unlike your light switch, they cannot be turned on and off at a moment's notice.

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## Holiday Closings



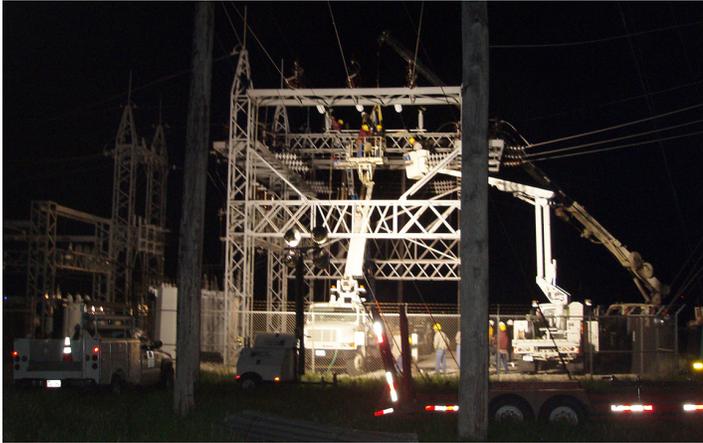
**Thank you to all the past and present, brave service men and women who show no hesitation in protecting, safeguarding and defending our country.**

Polk County RPPD will be closed on Monday, November 12th in observance of Veterans Day and on Thursday and Friday, November 22nd & 23rd for Thanksgiving. In the event of an outage, please call 402/764-4381.

# Customers Agree, Reliability is Important

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From the power plant, electricity travels at the speed of light through transmission and distribution lines to end users. What many don't know is that there is currently no economical way to store large amounts of electricity. There are no large battery systems capable of storing excess capacity for a later time when that power is needed. The moment we turn on the light switch, a generator must be running at that instant to meet that demand. This means that Nebraska's electric providers must balance the energy needs of consumers with the generation supplied. This requires a complicated balancing process, which takes into account customer usage trends and weather forecasting to help predict demand. Load control centers monitor electric generation and demand at every minute of every day, relaying messages to power plants telling them to increase or decrease generation to match consumer demand. If demand exceeds the amount of generation available, a blackout could occur.



*Above, crews work into the early morning hours in a substation restoring power to customers. Right, NPPD's Gerald Gentleman Coal fired power plant at Sutherland, NE generates the majority of the state's power. GGS has two units. At full capacity these units will burn 840 tons of coal per hour.*

outages, decreasing the time needed to identify the source, make repairs and re-energize electric lines.

Despite all efforts to maintain electric infrastructure and provide reliable service, Nebraska's severe weather can take a toll on our electric system. In the event of an outage, rural electric member-systems work together and employ a workforce of dedicated men and women that are called into action. These individuals often work in extreme and dangerous weather conditions to keep your power on.

Often working at night during severe storms, linemen must travel in hazardous conditions to identify problem areas. Once damages have been assessed and the source of an outage identified, rural electric systems have developed emergency response plans to restore service as fast as possible. This usually means that individuals work in a way that will get electricity restored to the most people as soon as possible. Major repairs involving substations and transmission lines may affect hundreds of people and will need to be repaired before distribution lines and individual outages will be fixed.

Nebraska's energy experts are managing the demands of a complex electric grid while responsibly increasing the use of environmentally friendly renewable energy resources and doing so with fewer outages than our neighboring states. A reliable electric supply is a result of complex system of multiple generation resources, miles of transmission and distribution lines, a complex load monitoring system, and a dedicated workforce willing to work in extreme conditions to keep your lights on. Nebraska's rural electric member-systems are working hard to keep your lights on and we are proud of our record.

Reliable electricity is also the result of a complex infrastructure of substations, transformers, and miles of transmission and distribution lines. The electric grid must be constantly monitored, controlled, and maintained to ensure reliability. Some of the most common causes of electric outages are related to animals and trees coming into contact with power lines and weather related incidents. The electric grid has many safeguards designed to isolate these outages. Circuit breakers along the power lines will trip isolating an outage. In many cases electricity can be redirected along a secondary path keeping the lights on for customers. Electric providers have also incorporated new advances in technology which can help to pinpoint the cause of



## Keep Hackers Out of Your Computer

Public power districts protect the private information of members and ensure hackers don't tamper with the reliability of the electric grid, but consumers have a lot at stake, too.

Cyber criminals all over the world are on the prowl through the internet, and they're getting better at what they do, according to the team of cyber security experts at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

"The bad guys tend to be a step ahead and we're always going to be playing catch-up, so you're never going to be 100 percent secure," says Barry Lawson, a senior director of regulatory affairs at NRECA. He adds, "But it's not something to be afraid of. There are basic steps people can take to provide good layers of protection."

The first step is to make cyber hygiene a habit. Incorporate basic security steps into your daily mind-set.

Start by creating a strong password, especially for your main password that allows primary internet access, such as the ones that

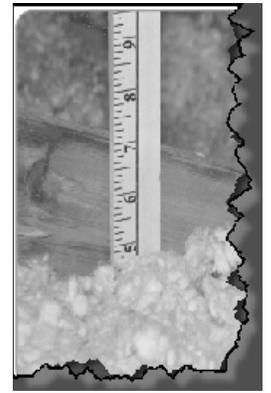
open your computer, phone and wireless router. Make it something you can remember, like the initials of a familiar phrase or a line or poem that is easy to remember. Add a memorable number to make the password more complex. You should change your password every six months, so if you're using a poem or song, move to the next line or verse every time you update your password.

And find a safe way to keep track of your passwords. There is software to help or password books that you can lock in a safe place.

Also, keep your software updated. Often the updates include patches to protect against new security threats. But don't click on any links or attached files in emails (including supposed software updates) that seem suspicious. If you're not expecting the email, check the application's website to make sure the update is legitimate.

Make being vigilant a habit. Stay one step ahead of hackers and thieves.

## Keep Heated and Cooled Air Inside Your Home



Do you know that new homes built in Nebraska are required to have R-38 or R-45 insulation in the attic? It takes 12 to 15 inches of blown-in cellulose to accomplish that!

If your home's primary heat source is electric then you may qualify for an Energy Wise™ incentive. Through this program we will pay up to \$.15 per square foot with a maximum incentive amount of \$300 per residential dwelling. Please call 402/764-4381 for additional information.

**N**otice: We are accepting applications for new irrigation services. Please contact Randy as soon as possible if you are planning on a new service for the 2019 season.

## Return Payments Information *by Dawn Dudgeon, Billing Clerk*

Some of us have made the mistake a time or two when it comes to balancing our bank accounts.

Banking over the years has changed how they handle and process all the payments they take in and send out. Anymore when a payment is returned unpaid, we no longer have the opportunity to run it twice. This means we have to put it back onto your account with a \$20.00 processing fee.

A letter is sent to you giving you seven business days to correct the error. Unfortunately, these payments need to be in the form of cash, money order or cashier's check. The replacement funds have to be guaranteed because of the return on the first payment. Paying by a debit card is not guaranteed funds.

If your bank has already made you aware of the return payment,

call and let us know. We may have not been notified yet, but taking the initiative and calling us is very appreciated. Also, when a bank returns a payment we have no control over the reason why. That would have to be handled between you and your bank, but we will assist you in any way we can to rectify the situation.

# Stopping Unwanted Robocalls

Robocalls are an ongoing topic of conversation in Nebraska, leaving consumers wondering what they can do to stop this annoyance.

Stopping illegal robocalls has been deemed a top consumer protection priority by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC). Despite protections such as the Do Not Call Registry, unwanted calls have been a top source of complaints to the FCC for years. Many of these calls have "spoofed" or misleading caller ID information. When committed with the intent to defraud, cause harm, or wrongly obtain anything of value, "spoofing" is illegal under the Truth in Caller ID Act. Those who ignore this law can face harsh penalties.

The Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA), passed by Congress in 1991, also restricts the making of unwanted calls including telemarketing robocalls.

Polk County RPPD customers who want to be notified of past due bills, planned or unplanned outages, safety issues or other business like concerns.

At this time public power and cooperatives are not considered a 'telemarketing' type of business, but a service provider. Currently, there is still some question as to whether or not our type of business is exempt.

With that being said, Polk County RPPD chose to be compliant with the Act and requests written verification from our customers who wish to be notified by robocalls, texts or email.

Any new customers will be sent a form when they hook up service and have the right to complete or deny automated information. The form is phone number specific. In most cases households would receive a form for the account holder and one for the spouse or significant other. Once the forms are returned they are coded into the customer database as to how customers wish to be notified.

In the event you change phone numbers it is your responsibility to contact our office and we will update the form.

If you are receiving unwanted robocalls, please contact the National Do Not Call Registry, which protects both landline and wireless numbers.

<https://www.donotcall.gov/>

There are several ways you can avoid unwanted calls. Additional information may be obtained by visiting the Attorney General's Consumer Protection website <https://protectthegoodlife.nebraska.gov/do-not-call> or call 800/727-6432.

*"Committed to enhancing the lives of our customers by providing safe, reliable, and economical energy through excellence in customer service and innovation."*

Work hard, stay focused and surround yourself with good people. Tom Osborne

Polk County RPPD News  
115 W 3rd St.  
Stromsburg NE 68666-0465  
Phone 402/764-4381

## Board of Directors

Mardell H. Johnson - President  
Vernon A. Kuhnel - Vice President  
Gary Allison - Treasurer  
James D. Carlson - Director  
Gene Urkoski - Director  
Robert Lindburg - Director  
Greg Kuhnel - Director

## Meetings

In accordance with Nebraska Statute, notice is hereby given that the regular meetings of the Board of Directors of Polk County Rural Public Power District are held on the 8th day of each month, commencing at 8:30 A.M. at the district office located at 115 W 3rd St., Stromsburg, Nebraska. In the event that the 8th falls on a Saturday, the meeting will be held on Friday the 7th. If the 8th falls on a Sunday or observed holiday, the meeting will be held the following business day. The meeting date shall be set by the Board of Directors and published in the Legal Notices of the local newspaper. An agenda for each regular meeting of the board is available for public inspection during business hours at least three (3) days prior to each meeting; provided however, that the Board of Directors shall have the right to modify the agenda to include any type of emergency item.

## Office Hours

8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.  
[www.pcrppd.com](http://www.pcrppd.com)

Through SmartHub™ you can register for recurring payments, make payments, monitor usage, review past payments, billing history and more.

You can also make mobile payments using Interactive Voice Response (IVR). You can simply enter the number #844/859-5977 in your phone contacts and make payments at any time. You can safely store payment methods and follow the prompts to complete payment.

Watch for updates and posts on our Facebook page.

## **"Committed to Excellence"**

James Papik - Attorney/Secretary  
Phil Burke - General Manager