

News from the Northeast Nebraska Public Power District

January 2009

Look for your Touchstone Energy Customer Discount Card in the near future

As part of our Touchstone Energy alliance with other rural electric systems across the nation, we have access to a program that may give you discounts on purchases made with national and local merchants. This program is especially valuable in that many pharmacies are set up to offer a discount on prescription medicines. Within a few months you will receive inside your electric bill a letter with details and a plastic card that makes you eligible to participate in the discount program. Many national chains and local merchants honor the Touchstone Energy discount card. In the meantime, you can learn more yourself, by using the web to go to <http://co-opconnections.com>. There you will be able to search for discounts offered by businesses in your area or by type of product.

How your electric bill dollar is spent

The cost of purchased power is our single largest expense with about 68 cents of every dollar going to pay for purchased power. The proportions of other expenses required to provide you with electric service are shown below:



Retail Rate Increase of 7.5% will be in effect for bills rendered after Jan 01, 2009

The Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) generates the power we deliver to you. This year they increased the cost of purchased power by 7%. The Northeast Nebraska PPD has worked to hold costs down and has actually absorbed some wholesale power costs increases without passing them along to customers. In recent years the cost of materials, fuel and labor needed by us to provide you with service have increased dramatically. For the first time in several years the NeNPPD is also increasing its rates to cover our cost increases. The total percentage increase to retail customers will be 7.5% on average. Actual bills may be more or less than this amount given the month and amount of energy purchased. There is only a small increase (or no increase) planned for 2010, depending again on the cost of purchased power.

Multiple Bills are sent in one envelope

We have many customers with more than one electric account. About two years ago we stopped printing and stuffing our bills in Wayne and contracted the work out for a savings in labor, paper and postage. However, customers with several accounts got several bills each month. The costs were not significant, but most customers didn't want all the separate envelopes. We have finally addressed the issue and are now sending multiple statements in one envelope. It took a fair amount of computer programming to accomplish and we believe things are working well as we haven't had any calls. However, if you do receive another person's bill by mistake, please call us immediately so that we can correct things.

Changes in Irrigation 'Red Days' will be in effect for 2009

Letters will soon go out to irrigation customers, which will invite them to an informational meeting. Our irrigation rates involve varying prices for energy used at different times of the day

and on different days of the week. With our new Automated Meter Reading System we now have the opportunity to help farmers lower some costs by reducing the number of hours that are commonly called 'Red Days'. These are the very highest priced hours of the week. Detailed information will be included in the letter. The waiting list for electric service to new pivots is about to close through 2010 and future requests for electric service will be part of our construction plans in 2011. Farmers must complete a written request for service to be put on our waiting list.

Safety for everyone is still top priority

Many people take electricity for granted and don't really think much about the extreme dangers of coming into contact with power lines. Downed power lines can occur as a result of car wrecks/farm equipment contacts and storms. We also worry about situations where people are moving augers, cranes, irrigation pipe and other metal objects under the power lines. We have worked well this year with farmers to put the wires to new grain bins in underground to avoid the risk of contact with augers. Occasionally, we learn of a dangerous situation as a result of something a customer is doing. The law and our insurance company require us to act when we know there is a danger. This might mean that we move the power line and bill the customer, which caused the danger some or all of the costs. Our thoughts are that this work is specific to a single customer and not always something to be paid out of rates. Safety education materials for all ages are available on our website or in print form at our office in Wayne.

A reminder that 'trip charges' apply for disconnects and re-connects

In the last newsletter we notified customers that a \$50.00 charge will be billed to the person requesting a disconnection of service during business hours. The cost of sending a man and truck out to disconnect and re-connect was evaluated and these charges now apply. Customers who move away can avoid paying the disconnect trip charge by working with their landlord or the new customer to get service officially put into the new customer's name. This must be done either over our website or in the office at Wayne. We can then read the meter remotely from our office without ever disconnecting the service.

Some meters still require the customer to read monthly (for a while longer)

Installation of all single-phase AMR meters is finished. About 93% of all the meters set worked fine right away. There are pockets of electrical interference that will require troubleshooting. We are working on this. We believe we can get in excess of 99% of all meters to read automatically, but may always have a few meters that won't work on the AMR system. This winter and spring we will be converting 3 phase meters and irrigation meters and plan to begin monthly billing by summer.

Welcome Amanda Meusch and Congratulations to other Employees

Amanda Meusch started work with us as a Customer Service Representative on Jan. 5, 2009. She is a native of Stuart, NE and a recent graduate of the Northeast Nebraska Community College in Norfolk. This month we presented Service Awards to the following employees: Jerry Wehrer – 40years; Curt Frey – 35 years and Mark Shults – 5 years.

The Board of Directors and Manager are:

Don Larsen, President
Dan Loberg, Secretary
Tom Gustafson
Mark Shults, Manager

Paul Bodlak, Vice President
Lowell Birkley
David Lebsock

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