

# News from the Northeast Nebraska Public Power District

October 2015

## **New Office Hours and Holiday Schedule**

Our office in Wayne opens and closes earlier each day. *Our new office hours are 7:30 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday.* Holidays for the remainder of 2015 are: Thanksgiving and the Friday after (November 26 and 27) and Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Payments can be made 24/7/365 by calling 800-750-9277. Drop boxes are located in Emerson, Osmond, Ponca and at the office in Wayne.

## **Electrical Inspections and a safety breaker disconnect required on all new electric services**

For the convenience and safety of all customers, the District will require new service connections to install a master breaker capable of disconnecting all of the customer's loads at the meter base. This change will save future customers the cost of expensive trip charges by the District to disconnect at the transformer or to pull the meter when an electrician needs to do work for the customer. This change should prove valuable for farmers that may have long runs of wire on their side of the meter when repairs are needed. More importantly, a breaker that can be locked in the cabinet will assure the electrician or farmer that the power is truly off for safety.

## **Transmission Line between Ponca and Martinsburg to be replaced later this this year**

The District's crews gained valuable experience late in 2014 by rebuilding 10 miles of high voltage lines between Winside and Wayne. We plan to rebuild the existing line between Ponca and Martinsburg late this year after crops are out of the field. The work must be well timed and executed to get the job complete in the narrow time between harvest and bad winter weather. Landowners will benefit because the updated designs being used permit longer span lengths between poles meaning fewer poles set in the fields. The Winside and Ponca rebuild projects are the first 20 miles in an effort to rebuild all 100 miles of the District's high voltage lines. The existing lines for the most part are now 50-60 years old and nearing the end of their useful life. The District has engineered a top grade line that will last for decades into the future, but thanks to the talents of our own line crews, we are saving substantial amounts of money over hiring a contractor to do this work.

## **Northeast to Challenge NPPD rate increase**

Our bulk power supplier, NPPD of Columbus NE, sent Northeast a notice of rate change for 2016. Charges for the delivery service over high voltage lines are increasing our costs by 1 %. Additionally, NPPD notified Northeast that it plans to raise the cost of wholesale energy 3.5% to fund NPPD's own health insurance benefits for NPPD's retirees now and in the future. The Northeast Board and several other wholesale customers of NPPD have sent a request for a hearing before the NPPD Board on this issue. NPPD's notice of rate increase offered very little explanation, but upon examination, the manner in which they have budgeted the additional \$25 million from rate charges for this retiree benefit is inconsistent with standard utility practices and we believe in error. A 3.5% increase will cost Northeast an extra \$500,000 to be collected each year through 2021. This is on top of the 2.5% Northeast's customers now pay in existing wholesale power charges for this retiree health insurance for NPPD's employees and retirees. Combined, we think the charges are excessive.

## **Why does the District ask customers to pay part of the cost of new electric lines on private property?**

There are times and situations when the District spends to build new lines or upgrade existing lines so that general service to a wider area is improved. These projects should be paid by the general rate payer in electric rates. When the District is asked to build a line to a private residence, farm or business on private property in such a way that the electric line will not be shared with other customers to serve a wider area, then the individual or business requiring the new line should pay the cost. This helps

prevent a subsidy through rates and helps keep electric rates lower. In fact, the District typically only retains about 15 % of our revenue each year to re-invest in new electric lines, so there is actually little money built into rates to build new lines, and we have to be careful how we use that money.

### **\$10 Bill Credit Still Available for choosing to go ‘paperless’**

Volunteer to get your bill by email and get a onetime credit of \$10.00. If you decide you don’t really need a paper copy, or would like to see your bill as soon as it becomes available instead of waiting for it to be mailed, you may be a good candidate for E-bill. In addition to receiving your bill by email, you can also now pay electronically through the “customer portal” on our website [www.nnppd.com](http://www.nnppd.com) or via our free App (keyword:NNPPD). We also offer bank draft, recurring payment options, and the ability to pay by phone with credit/debit cards or E-checks. If you would like to streamline dealing with your monthly utility bill, call us at 1-800-750-9277.

### **The Nebraska Legislature will consider a ‘Wind for Export’ Bill**

We wanted to let you know why we think this is a pretty good idea! Many rural people (like our customers) need property tax relief. If Nebraska can streamline its approval processes to attract new wind farms and the taxes they will pay, then new, large, tax paying investments might be made in Nebraska instead of other States. This can make a real dent in what any one of the Counties in our service area needs from taxes.....saving our customers money by increasing the tax base. The proposed ‘Wind for Export’ bill doesn’t propose a subsidy. It is a statement to wind developers that Nebraska is focused on their business and has cut the red tape and smoothed some of the processes to help them locate here. Northeast PPD has two sites inside Wayne and Dixon Counties that private developers have identified for investment. We would like to see that happen. Berkshire Hathaway Energy is developing a large wind farm in Holt County that is expected to pay \$2 million a year in property taxes. Wind power has developed into a very low cost means of production and with the new Clean Power Plan standards on carbon emissions, the eastern US will be looking to the Plains States like Nebraska for wind power. We support taking advantage of the opportunity for new investment in our area.

### **Save money on prescription refills – Try it**

Over the years, we have tried to remind our customers of a free benefit. You can read about our ‘Connection Card’ on our web page at [www.nnppd.com](http://www.nnppd.com). As a Touchstone Energy Cooperative member, the District’s customers may have a discount opportunity. Customers without insurance or access to another drug discount program like AARP are welcome to use our discount program. This is NOT insurance, but it does lower the amounts some pay on some medicines. Call our office and ask us to mail you a free Co-op Connections Card with this pharmacy discount information.

### **New Employees**

Robert Kramer of Wayne has joined our billing staff and Terry Winters of Wayne recently was employed as our mapping technician.

### **The Board of Directors and Manager are:**

Don Larsen, President

Dan Gansebom, Secretary

David Lebsock

Paul Bodlak, Vice President

Diane Newton

Larry Silhacek

Tom Gustafson, Treasurer

Sy Kneifl

Mark Shults, Manager

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