

# **News from the Northeast Nebraska Public Power District**

April 2007

This newsletter is to keep you informed of how the Board of Directors, Management and Employees of the Northeast Nebraska PPD are working to serve you. We want to continue to make ourselves available for your comments and suggestions. Please let us hear from you by calling **800-750-9277**.

## **Why Not Put Power Lines Underground?**

As with most things in life, there must be tradeoff between the advantages and disadvantages of any investment. Underground power lines certainly have the advantage when it comes to ice damage, wind and falling trees. There are other hazards for underground power lines that most people don't think about very often, like rodents, a back-hoe or post-hole diggers and even lightning can cause serious damage to underground lines. The hazards that cause outages on underground lines tend to happen when the weather is good, while overhead lines tend to have more problems when the weather is poor.

For years underground lines were substantially more expensive to build than overhead lines and the life-span of the underground wire was much less. Improvements in the insulating material for underground lines have made the life-span longer, but still short of overhead lines. The cost of installing underground wire has come down over the years and going underground in some cases is the lowest installed cost.

Perhaps the biggest draw back to using underground lines is the longer time required to make repairs. With an overhead line, our crews can visually inspect the wires for problems with animals, trees, broken wires, and so on. It is a longer process to mobilize the test equipment required to help pinpoint where an underground problem might be and more difficult to effect repairs. More equipment is usually needed to repair underground lines. Some of the outages experienced by customers aren't caused by line troubles at all, but are the result of a Substation or main feeder being out of service.

## **To Avoid Outages, can't power lines be built with some form of back-up?**

Yes and No. If we were to have 100% redundancy in all our equipment and power lines then no one could afford electric service. Even if two power lines were situated down the same road they would be exposed to the same hazards and might be out at the same time. This is true of Substations and other equipment. The District does invest in some back up equipment to avoid long outages. We keep spare Substation Transformers on hand that can be moved around within a few hours. These transformers take over a year to build so we can't just call up a supplier and get one delivered. We also try to build power lines that can connect to more than one substation to provide an alternative source of power. The practice of trying to have more than one source of power proved handy in this January's storm east of Pierce when our normal feed from the south was damaged and we could feed power into the area from the north and east. It is still impossible to connect every power line to more than one substation. At some point the cost of redundancy can't be justified. District personnel keep detailed records of when and where outages occur and the cause of the outage. This information is reviewed periodically to determine if an investment might be justified for improved reliability. Since all investments come from general rate funds we try to be careful that investments are needed and will benefit as many customers as possible.

## **NeNPPD line crews go to Iowa**

Recently there was a major ice storm in Iowa. Major storms can overwhelm the workforce of a rural electric system and the folks in Iowa put out a call for help. The storm covered most of Iowa in a layer of ice. NeNPPD linemen, Boyd Doyle (Osmond), Barry Anderson (Ponca), Leo

Rohan (Emerson) and Josh Siebrandt (Wayne) answered the call and volunteered to go to work helping rebuild damaged lines. They spent an entire week in Iowa with crews from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri and other States. After the New Year's storm here in Nebraska, several of our crews worked for weeks around Creighton and Battle Creek, Nebraska helping our neighboring Districts.

### **Dave Lebsock appointed to the Board of Directors**

At their regular meeting on February 27, 2007 the Board of Directors appointed Mr. David Lebsock of Ponca, NE to complete the unexpired term of Director Jim Decker. Jim resigned after he moved out of our District into Cedar County. Dave is the current Mayor of the Town of Ponca and an agent for the Northeast Nebraska Insurance Agency there. Dave has been active in many projects for the betterment of the Ponca community. The entire Board of Directors is pleased to have Dave as a member of the Board and believe the District will benefit from his efforts and insights.

### **Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) Project about to start in Allen, NE**

After a year of research and study the NeNPPD has selected Cannon Technologies as its supplier for the AMR project. Allen, NE was selected as the first test site because Allen has its own Substation and has a relatively compact grouping of meters. Our crews will soon be replacing old meters in Allen with new electronic meters that are capable of communicating over the power lines back to a computer at the substation. Then, from the Substation meter readings can be gathered as many times as needed for billing or customer needs. With time and experience the meters will also be able to help us address blinking lights and other service problems.

### **Collection Fees modified for Non-sufficient Funds Checks**

We have a set fee of \$30.00 per check when accepted as payment and then returned for insufficient funds. We have retained a collection agency for those times when an account is closed, service is disconnected, the customer has moved and we get a returned check for the final payment. The collection agency has a fee of \$35.00 for the returned check and could have other fees associated with the collection effort. These fees will not be paid by the District, but rather by the customer that wrote the check. It is our practice to collect cash or money order for the returned check rather than accept a second check. Should we get two checks returned within a 12-month period, we won't accept any more checks from the customer for a period of 12 months.

### **Statement of Nondiscrimination**

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, the Northeast Nebraska Public Power District is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write:

USDA, Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Stop 1510, 1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, DC 2050-1510.

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination.

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

Don Larsen, President	Paul Bodlak, Vice President	Sy Kneifl, Treasurer
Dan Loberg, Secretary	Lowell Birkley	Dan Gansebom
Tom Gustafson	Larry Silhacek	Dave Lebsock
Mark Shults, Manager		

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