

June 2011

## How About Those New Meters?

By Rick Nelson, General Manager

Several years ago we began a project that will increase reliability, help us control costs, and eliminate the need for you to read the meter.

You've heard us refer to this project as AMR, for automatic meter reading. Literally what happens is your meter sends a digital signal through the power lines that transmits information to us.

We have been working diligently to get this project up & running. We have now completed all of the meters in our service territory.

Back in the first phase of this operation, we discovered something that we couldn't put a dollar figure on. We quickly found out that we could do some amazing things such as help customers find the cause of high bills in many cases. You know, things like the well had a leak and they didn't know it, or the water heater was running all the time, or they didn't know that some new appliance used so much electricity (those huge new TVs, for example, are guilty of major energy suckage).

The new system also tells us the location of outages and how big an outage is, so we can send the right people right away rather than waiting for the first truck to get out there and report back.

All of those things and more we can do now because we can now read the meters by remote control.

The main reason we installed these new meters



was to rid all of us of the chore of reading your meter and to increase the accuracy of that meter reading.

I'll be the first to admit that I've transposed two numbers when I wrote down my meter reading the first part of February, in the cold. Transposing numbers on a meter reading can cause the bills to be inaccurate, sometimes wildly.

Reading the meter electronically also decreases the chance of someone goofing up the numbers when keypunching data into the computer. We've thus eliminated two stages of potential human error.

Now, as we change from the old system to the new, there's something I have to explain. In our current system you receive your normal statement on the first of the month and payment is due on the 10th of the month. That bill is for the energy (kWh) you used two months ago. Meanwhile, the meter reading you turn in when you pay your bill won't get billed to you until the following month. There's been a two-month lag forever and now we need to play catch-up.

That creates a problem. If we begin using the automatic meter reading from the day before we send the bills, then there will be two months of usage on your bill – the one you mailed to us under the old system, plus the new automated reading.

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This means that some people may see a bill that's about double the normal amount, due to this one time "leap forward" in our billing cycle.

To reduce the problem and help ease the pain, we are decreasing the amount of time between the last meter reading that you mailed in and the date when we read the meter automatically.

For example, instead of getting a double bill some of you are getting a new statement that was read on the 10th and due the 20th, thus reducing that meter reading time by 20 days from a double bill.

Some of you will be getting that second statement on the 20th and due on the 30th, thus reducing that time span by 10 days from a double bill.

There is no perfect way to do it, so we are also happy to work with individual customers to help them set up a plan to get caught up. If this changeover has created a difficulty for you, please call and visit with one of our Customer Solutions Representatives.

Once we get through the transition, your billing will be the same from here forward. Please note

that we planned to make this changeover during a time of year when average usage is lower than it is in the middle of summer or winter.

If you haven't yet received a letter from us explaining this process, it means your billing will not be switched over until this fall. If you have received the letter, then I hope this explanation helps.

We truly regret that this new procedure requires us to issue two statements so closely together and we'll work with you to make it do-able for your budget.

That said, the benefits we'll see in years to come will truly make the hassle seem worthwhile.

Again, please don't hesitate to call if getting two bills back-to-back is a problem. We know there are a lot of folks on fixed incomes or minimum wage or who are working reduced hours. Just call 1-888-749-2453 and ask to speak to a Customer Solutions Representative.

Many thanks for your patience and understanding.

## 2011 Kids Fair



Tycen Marten listens as Jamie Hurlburt explains why it is unsafe to have electricity near water.

On April 6 Cindy Lindner, Jamie Hurlburt and Jeff Wardyn participated in the Kids Fair held in the Broken Bow High School Gym. They presented the low voltage display that always gets a lot of interest. They also borrowed Dawson PPD's electric bike and the kids had fun trying to get all the light bulbs to light up using their own power.





# Power Drive



Stapleton High School seniors, Zach Kramer, Eric Garrelts, and Austin Jones, worked on some new engineering designs for this year's electric car entry. The team worked on a sliding brake pedal because of differences in the height of the drivers and fiber glassing the nose shape and tail to get better aerodynamics. The team put on a 24 inch drive wheel which changed the gear ratios for speed and also the steering control. They tested the amp pull differences between the 20 inch drive wheel and the 24 inch drive wheel.



Stapleton Team (l to r) Bud Harvey, Instructor, Austin Jones, Eric Garrelts, and Zach Kramer

The Hastings rally was the only rally the team was able to attend this year due to other activities the same day or weather cancellations. The car scored well in engineering and maneuverability. Zach was the driver and this was a first time experience. Instructor, Bud Harvey said the team had very creative and good ideas.



On Saturday, April 30, 2011 the Litchfield Power Drive team took both of their electric cars to compete in braking, maneuverability, and one-hour endurance race for each car. The standard class car was selected first in design and engineering and finished third in the endurance race. The team had great results with their advanced class car as well; they finished first and third in braking and maneuverability respectively. At the State Competition held Saturday, May 7, in Papillion, Nebraska, they received second place in documentation.

Team Members who participated in the Hastings competition were Ricky Magner, Michael Seery, Tyler Snow, Nathan Siegel, Jade Jansen, Adam Kucera, and Gorden Eggers, Instructor. Other team members unable to attend were Mike Sheets, Kaleb Sekutera, Austin Kramer, and Kris Kerkow.



# Herb-and-Mustard Sirloin With Baked Potatoes

**Total Time:** 30 min  
**Prep Time:** 10 min  
**Cook Time:** 20 min  
**Makes:** 4 servings

## What You Need

4 small russet potatoes, scrubbed  
 1 1/2 pounds sirloin steak (1/2 inch thick)  
 2 tablespoons spicy mustard, plus more for serving  
 2 teaspoons crumbled herbes de Provence  
 5 tablespoons unsalted butter  
 Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper  
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives or scallion greens

## Make It

Pierce the potatoes a few times with a fork, then microwave until soft, about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, pierce both sides of the steak with a fork. Mix the mustard and herbes de Provence in a bowl and rub all over the steak.

Heat a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add 1 tablespoon butter; as soon as it melts, add the steak and sear on one side until browned, about 7 minutes. Turn and brown the other side, about 4 more minutes for medium-rare. Transfer the steak to a cutting board, season with salt and pepper, and top with 1 tablespoon butter. Let rest at least 5 minutes.

Return the skillet to medium-high heat. Add the potatoes and turn to coat on all sides with the pan juices. Cook until the skins are slightly crisp, about 3 minutes.

Mix the remaining 3 tablespoons butter with the chives and season with salt. Thinly slice the steak on the bias. Serve with the potatoes, chive butter and mustard.

## Nutrition Facts

Per Serving	Calories 478	Fat 20g (Sat 11g)
Cholesterol 99mg	Sodium 217mg	Carbohydrate 31g
Fiber 3g	Protien 42g	

*Happy Father's Day!*

# CUSTER CURRENTS

Newsletter of the  
**CUSTER PUBLIC POWER  
 DISTRICT**

Broken Bow, NE - Phone 872-2451  
[www.custerpower.com](http://www.custerpower.com)

Serving Custer, Loup, Blaine, Thomas,  
 Hooker, McPherson, Logan and parts of  
 Sherman, Garfield, Brown, Cherry,  
 Lincoln, and Dawson Counties

## *Officers & Directors*

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 Brad Bartak, Merna.....Vice President  
 Margaret Bradley, Brewster.....Secretary  
 Brad Howard, Litchfield.....Treasurer  
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 Lloyd Ramsey, Broken Bow.....Director  
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Rick Nelson.....General Manager  
 Tom Knott.....Director of Operations  
 and Loss Control  
 Cheryl Taylor.....Director of Finance and  
 Administration

## *Board Meetings*

The regular monthly meeting of the Custer Public Power District Board of Directors is on the last Thursday of each month, beginning at 10:00 a.m. in the main office in Broken Bow on Hwy. 2.

An agenda for each regular meeting of the board is available for public inspection during business hours.

In the event of matters of an emergency nature or conflicts with other meeting dates, the Board of Directors will set changes. Any change in the monthly meeting date will be posted in the legal notice at the main headquarters building at Broken Bow and at each of the District's area service centers located in Callaway, Sargent, Stapleton and Thedford, Nebraska.