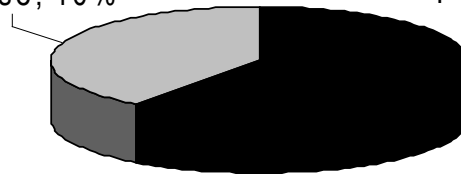


## Keeping Rates Affordable

By Rick Nelson, General Manager

As we look to 2012 to set rates, I thought I'd fill you in on some of the efforts we make behind the scenes to reduce costs and decrease rate increases.

Budget,  
Operating  
Expense, 40%



Budget,  
Wholesale  
Power Costs,  
60%

The smallest portion of the budget is the material and equipment needed to keep the lights on.

Because 60% of our cost is, for the most part, out of our control,

First let's look at the biggest chunk of the budget. Roughly 60% of the budget goes to buying wholesale electric power from NPPD. Their job is to generate it. Our job is to get it to your homes, farms, ranches, and businesses.

several years ago we began taking a tough look at the other areas of the budget for potential savings. We cut our budget in numerous areas for the 2010 budget. We delayed truck replacements, cut our tree trimming budget, and delayed other capital projects and expenditures in order to decrease costs to help offset some of the wholesale power increase.

When the cost of generating electricity goes up, our wholesale power cost and your retail electric bill go up. NPPD is a well-run outfit. They're careful and forward thinking. But they have limited ability to control some of the biggest drivers of their cost, such as environmental regulations, the cost of fuel, or the cost of shipping fuel.

When it came time to do the 2011 budget, we took several steps to reduce expenditures. The first was a change to our health insurance. Making some changes to our deductibles, we are saving close to \$100,000 per year in health care costs. We also provided an early retirement at a savings of almost \$300,000 in wages and benefits over the next two years and even more beyond that. All of that equates to saving you 2.5% in your rates.

That's why it's so important to keep track of regulations and legislation where we can have some influence to hold the line on costs, and the folks on Custer PPD's lines have been quick and forceful whenever we've asked for help with that. Thanks again!

For 2012, wholesale power costs are increasing by 6.5%. My goal is to hold the line everywhere else on our costs. If we are able to do that, then that 6.5% rate increase would turn into about 3.9% on your bill, since wholesale power is 60% of the total bill. In the next few months we'll be finalizing Custer's budget for 2012 and I'll report back.

After the cost of electric power, the next largest component of our budget is labor costs. Custer PPD covers 8,000 square miles. It takes more people to cover that area than a typical rural electric system.

## Attic Insulation:

This is the best time of year to start thinking about getting ready for the cold weather. In a recent survey of our customers, one of the favorite changes customers were willing to make was increasing the number of inches of insulation in the attic.

It just so happens we have a rebate for attic insulation that equals \$0.15 per square foot of attic space.

To be eligible:

- You must average 6 inches or less in the attic, which is R-19 or below.
- You must add at least 6 inches of new insulation. On average, 12 to 15 inches of insulation gives you a value of R-38 to R-45, which is the recommended attic insulation value.

To get a rebate from us as an electric provider:

- You must have a heat pump or electric furnace or electric heat (baseboard, radiant, etc.).

Adding insulation is a great way to reduce your electric usage and gain the comfort of a warmer house this winter.

## Sealing Ducts:

In houses with forced-air heating and cooling systems, ducts are used to distribute conditioned air throughout the house. In a typical house, however, about 20 percent of the air that moves through the duct system is lost due to leaks and poorly sealed connections. The result is higher utility bills and difficulty keeping the house comfortable, no matter how the thermostat is set.

Because some ducts are concealed in walls and between floors, repairing them can be difficult. However, exposed ducts in attics, basements, crawlspaces, and garages can be repaired by sealing the leaks with duct sealant (also called duct mastic).

## Caulking:

Don't forget to take a couple of hours on a cool Saturday afternoon to walk around the house with a caulk gun (with the appropriate caulk in a tube) and close up gaps and cracks that could let in cold air this winter. The more you can reduce drafty areas of the house, the lower your heating bill will be.



12-B

***We've extended the date - you have until October 31, 2011 to submit pictures for the 2012 calendar. Go capture some of those beautiful fall colors.***

*Custer Public Power District*



*October 2011*

# Farmers Urged to Look Up During Harvest Season

Harvest season is the most satisfying time of the year on the farm, as it's the culmination of many long hours of effort in raising a crop. However, the long grueling hours in the field can make workers weary and prone to forget the safety precautions that can prevent serious or fatal electrical injuries. Every year, an average 62 farm workers are electrocuted in the United States and many more are injured, according to Labor Department statistics.

“The No. 1 cause of electrocution on the farm is an auger that hits a power line when being moved,” says Bob Aherin, extension agricultural safety specialist, University of Illinois. Portable augers being maneuvered by hand around bin sites have caused the death of many farm workers who became the path to ground for electricity when the top of the auger touched overhead power lines. Always retract or lower augers when moving or transporting.



The most common equipment involved in power line accidents are portable grain augers, oversized wagons, large combines, and other tall equipment that come into contact with the overhead lines.

Farm operators, family members, and farm employees are urged to take these measures:

- Use a spotter when moving tall loads near lines.
  - Inspect farm equipment for transport height, and determine clearance with any power lines under which the equipment must pass.
  - Make sure everyone knows what to do if accidental contact is made with power lines.
- These accidents are survivable if the right actions are taken.

It's almost always best to stay in the cab, call for help, and wait until the electric utility arrives to make sure power to the line is cut off. If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path and electrocution is the result. Even if a power line is on the ground, there is still the potential for the area nearby to be energized. Stay inside the vehicle unless there's fire or imminent risk of fire. In that case, the proper action is to jump—not step—with both feet hitting the ground at the same time. Jump clear, without touching the vehicle and ground at the same time, and continue to shuffle or hop to safety keeping both feet together as you leave the area.

Like the ripples in a pond or lake, the voltage diminishes the farther out it is from the source. Stepping from one voltage level to another allows the body to become a path for that electricity. A large difference in voltage between both feet could kill you. Be sure that at no time you or anyone touches the equipment and the ground at the same time. Never should the operator simply step out of the vehicle—the person must jump clear.

The overhead electric wires are not the only electrical contact that can result in a serious incident. Pole guy wires are grounded to the neutral, but when one of the guy wires is broken, it can cause an electric current disruption. This can make those neutral wires anything but harmless. If you hit a guy wire and break it, call the utility to fix it. Do not do it yourself. When dealing with electrical poles and wires, always call the electric utility.

# Mississippi Corn Bread Salad

**Prep Time:** 30 minutes **Bake Time:** per package directions  
**Chill:** overnight **Oven:** per package directions

## What You Need

- 1 8.5 oz. pkg. corn muffin mix
- 1 cup mayonnaise or salad dressing
- 1 8 oz. carton sour cream
- 1 1 oz. envelope dry ranch salad dressing mix
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese (8 ounces)
- 2 15 oz. cans pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 15.25 oz. cans whole kernel corn, drained
- 10 slices bacon, crisp-cooked, drained, and crumbled
- 3 cups coarsely chopped tomatoes
- 1 cup chopped red and/or green sweet peppers
- ½ cup sliced green onions

### 1 The day before:

Prepare muffin mix according to directions for corn bread. Cool and crumble. (You should have about 5 cups crumbs.) Crumble bacon. Set crumbs and bacon aside.



Recipe by: Better Home and Gardens

**2** For dressing, in a small bowl combine mayonnaise, sour cream and salad dressing mix.

**3** In a 3-to 4-quart glass serving bowl or, 3-quart rectangular baking dish layer crumbled corn bread and 1 cup of the cheese. Spread with half the dressing. Layer in the following order: beans, corn, the remaining 1 cup cheese, bacon, tomatoes, sweet pepper, and the remaining dressing. Cover tightly and chill overnight. Keep in insulated cooler with ice packs for before the tailgate party.

**4** Before serving, sprinkle salad with green onions.

Makes 18 to 20 servings.

### Per Servings

342 cal.	21 g fat	38 mg chol.
779 mg sodium	30 g carbo	4 g fiber
11 g protein		

## 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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 Margaret Bradley, Brewster.....Secretary  
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 Greg Smith, Milburn.....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.