



NINNESCAH RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# Watts Ahead

## NINNESCAH RURAL ELECTRIC CO-OP, INC.

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### IN CASE OF AN OUTAGE

If your electricity is off for more than a few minutes, please call 620-672-5538. The office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday–Friday. After hours, calls will be answered by dispatch and forwarded to our on-call personnel.

## 3 Smart Home Technologies to Help You Save Energy

Smart technologies make our homes more comfortable, convenient and energy efficient. By connecting your home Wi-Fi network, smart devices automate everyday tasks, like lighting, heating, cooling, and home security, and they can even communicate with other smart devices within the home.

While not all smart home products are specifically designed with energy savings in mind, there are several smart technologies that can help you lower your home energy use. Here are the top three smart home devices to help you save.

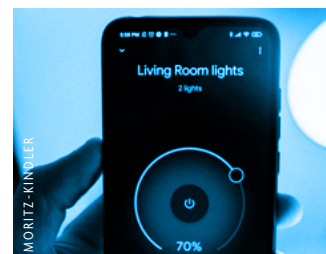
### SMART THERMOSTATS

Smart or not, your thermostat is the most effective tool for controlling energy use, as heating and cooling typically account for the largest portion of energy bills. Smart thermostats enable you to adjust the indoor temperature through an app, giving you full control from anywhere on the go. Many smart thermostats feature learning capabilities, which allow them to adjust the thermostat based on previous behavior and patterns.

According to the Department of Energy, smart thermostats can reduce annual heating and cooling bills by more than 8%. With models as low as \$65, they typically pay for themselves in one year.

### SMART LIGHTING

Smart LED bulbs use less electricity than traditional bulbs and can be scheduled or turned off (or on) remotely through a smartphone app. Smart bulbs are available in a range of shapes,



brightness levels, colors and more, so shop for the products that work best for your home lighting needs.

Many smart bulbs include motion sensors that turn on or off based on room activity, further optimizing home energy use. If you're new to smart lighting, try a home starter kit. Prices for kits range from \$70 to \$300-plus, depending on how many bulbs you need.

### SMART PLUGS

Smart plugs are inexpensive gadgets that can help you save energy. Many electronic devices consume power even when turned off (known as "phantom load"), which can impact your energy bills. An estimated 5% to 15% of household energy use is attributed to phantom loads. Smart plugs are simply plugged into an electrical outlet and connected to your Wi-Fi network. When set up, the smart plug can cut power (or return power) to non-smart devices, like coffee makers, phone chargers and other items that draw phantom load.

Many smart plugs can be paired with popular smart hubs, like Alexa or Google Nest, or controlled through the plug's associated app. Smart plugs are simple to use, and a set of four can be purchased for as little as \$25.

If you're looking for new ways to save energy, consider these budget-friendly and convenient smart home technologies.



## Avoid Fines, Injuries and Power Outages

National Safe Digging Day, or 811 Day, is upon us. Easy to remember due to its 8/11 date, the day serves as a good reminder to have underground utilities marked before breaking ground. Having utilities marked is free and easy to do; simply call 811 two to three business days before starting your project. While state laws vary, utility companies generally have two to three days to respond to your request.

Why is it necessary to get buried utilities marked? Underground lines are unyielding, and their path is unpredictable. Digging in an unmarked yard can mean striking an underground utility line, which can cause serious injury. Damaging a utility line can also cause unwanted service disruptions, including a power outage, as well as a hefty fine.

“While it can be tempting to skip the important step of calling before you dig, it can be a costly and dangerous omission,” says Erin Hollinshead, executive director of Safe Electricity. “Underground utility lines could be anywhere. They also shift over time and can be found just a few inches from the surface.”

Every project, big or small, requires advance notification to 811. To start the underground utility marking process, call 811 or visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com). Examples of projects that require utility location include installing a fence, a mailbox post, a deck or

patio, and planting trees and shrubs, among others. Any project that breaks ground requires that underground utilities be marked.

If a contractor is involved, check with that person to determine who will make the request. Locators do not mark private lines such as service to outbuildings, underground sprinkler systems or a gas lines to grills, for example. Private lines are the homeowner’s responsibility.

### BEFORE DIGGING IN, TAKE THESE FIVE STEPS TO SAFER DIGGING:

- 1** Pre-mark the proposed dig area with white paint or white flags.
- 2** Call 811 or submit your locate request online before you dig. There is no charge for the service.
- 3** Wait the required amount of time (typically two to three business days).
- 4** Respect the marks and do not move any flags.
- 5** Dig with care. Avoid digging on top of or within 18-24 inches on all sides of utility marks, which may mean moving your digging project to another part of your yard.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [www.safeelectricity.org](http://www.safeelectricity.org). For more information about 811, visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com).

## Do Not Overlook Overhead Power Lines

It can be easy to overlook things that we see every day, including overhead power lines. However, failure to notice overhead lines can be deadly. If you or an object you are touching contacts or gets too close to a power line, you could be seriously injured or killed.

Overhead power lines require a minimum clearance of 10 feet in all directions. This distance rule applies to the power lines draped from pole to pole that line roads (distribution lines), as well as the drop-down lines that service homes or other structures.

If your job requires you to operate equipment in the vicinity of large transmission lines and towers, they require even more clearance than distribution and drop-down lines. That clearance is determined by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). OSHA mandates line clearance distances for all types of power lines. Be mindful of overhead power lines when completing the following tasks:

### HOME MAINTENANCE

Always be aware of the location of power lines, particularly when using long tools, such as ladders, pool skimmers and pruning poles. Lower long tools and equipment before moving or transporting them. Other safety tips include:

- ▶ Carry ladders and other long items horizontally whenever possible.
- ▶ Be careful when working on or around your roof.
- ▶ Never go on a roof in windy or bad weather.

### YARD WORK

When trimming trees, do not allow yourself or trimmers to come within 10 feet of overhead power lines, including service lines to your home or outbuilding. Also:

- ▶ Do not trim trees near power lines; instead, leave this to certified line clearance tree trimmers.
- ▶ Do not use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near electric lines.

### FARMING

Review power line locations and other potential electrical hazards with all workers at morning safety meetings. Equipment that could get too close or contact a power pole or line includes sprayer tips, tall equipment, dump trucks, augers and other extensions.

### AT WORK

Follow all OSHA distance requirements when operating dump trucks, cranes, concrete pump truck extensions and when working on a roof or in a bucket.

### OTHER REMINDERS

- ▶ Do not come within 50 feet of a downed or damaged power line. Warn others to stay away. Call 911 to report it.
- ▶ Never climb trees near power lines. Even if the power lines are not touching the tree, they could come in contact when weight is added to the branch. Look up and look out for overhead power lines. Contact can happen in an instant. For additional electrical safety tips, go to [www.safeelectricity.org](http://www.safeelectricity.org).

## LOOK OUT FOR POWER SOURCES

Do not get within **10 FEET** (in any direction) of a power line.

**BE AWARE** of power lines when working on a roof.

**DO NOT TRIM** branches or limbs near power lines.

Be careful when **CARRYING LONG OR TALL OBJECTS** such as ladders or poles.

Before you dig, **CALL 811** to have underground utilities marked.

**DO NOT DIG** near padmount transformers or other utility equipment.

### Starting a new project?

1 NOTIFY	2 WAIT	3 CONFIRM	4 RESPECT	5 DIG CAREFULLY
Call 811 or make a request online two to three days before you plan to start your project.	Wait two to three days for a response to your request. Affected utilities will mark underground lines.	Confirm all affected utilities have responded by comparing the list of utilities the 811 call center notified.	Respect the markers and use them as a guide for the duration of your project.	If you can't avoid digging near the provided markers (within 24 inches on all sides according to Kansas law), consider moving your project.

**Follow these 5 STEPS for safe digging**

NOTE 811 does not mark privately owned utility lines, invisible fences or sprinkler systems. Call a private utility locator for these.

**WHAT DO ALL THE FLAGS MEAN?**

- Proposed Excavation
- Electric power lines, cables, conduit and lighting cables
- Alarm, signal or communication lines, cables or conduit
- Reclaimed water, irrigation and slurry lines
- Temporary survey markings
- Gas, oil, steam, petroleum or gaseous materials
- Potable water
- Sewers and drain lines

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Ginger S. Allman – *Wichita*

Robbie K. &/or Scott Griffiths – *Long Island*

Zachary M. Kizzar &/or Jayln Shaw – *Pratt*

Brian Maloney – *Kingman*

Brad &/or Jennifer Samuelson – *Gibbon, NE*

Weston Stimatze – *Macksville*

Corey Weber – *St. John*



## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY TIPS

School buses are among the safest vehicles on the road — but the greatest risk comes when children are getting on or off the bus. Whether you're a driver, parent or student, knowing these safety tips will help keep everyone safe.

### FOR DRIVERS

- ▶ **SLOW DOWN:** Reduce speed in school zones and near bus stops.
- ▶ **KEEP YOUR DISTANCE:** Stay back at least 10 feet from a school bus — this is the most dangerous area for children.
- ▶ **STAY ALERT:** Watch for kids who may unexpectedly enter the road, especially near bus stops.
- ▶ **RESPECT THE ZONE:** When flashers are blinking in a school zone, stop for pedestrians at crosswalks and take extra care to look for children near playgrounds, parks and residential areas.

### KNOW THE SIGNALS:

- ▶ **YELLOW FLASHING LIGHTS:** Bus is preparing to stop. Slow down.
- ▶ **RED FLASHING LIGHTS AND STOP ARM:** Bus is loading/unloading — stop and wait until the bus moves again.
- ▶ **NEVER PASS A STOPPED BUS ON AN UNDIVIDED ROAD:** It's illegal in most states.

### FOR PARENTS

Teach your child to arrive at the bus stop at least 5 minutes early, and how to play it **SAFE**:

- ▶ Stay back at least 10 feet, or five giant steps, from the curb.
- ▶ Always wait for the bus to stop and the driver to signal before boarding.
- ▶ Face forward and buckle up if seat belts are available.
- ▶ Exit carefully, look both ways and cross in front of the bus — never behind. Make eye contact with the driver before crossing.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

# Moment of Caution May Prevent Lifetime of Regret

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  - ▶ **YELLOW FLASHING LIGHTS:** Bus is preparing to stop — slow down.
  - ▶ **RED FLASHING LIGHTS PLUS STOP ARM:** Bus is loading/unloading — stop and wait until the bus moves again.
  - ▶ Never pass a stopped bus on an undivided road — It's illegal in most states.
  - ▶ **STAY ALERT:** Watch for kids who may unexpectedly enter the road, especially near bus stops.
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As students head back to school, remember: A moment of caution can prevent a lifetime of regret.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Replace your cooling system's filter regularly to maintain strong airflow and boost energy efficiency. A clean filter means your system doesn't have to work as hard, saving energy and lowering your utility bills. Factors like allergies and pets in the home can impact how often filters should be replaced. Check the filter every month and replace it as needed. Changing filters regularly also reduces wear and tear on your cooling system, helping extend the life of the unit. **SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV**



**LABOR Day Office Closing**

In observance of Labor Day, our office will be closed on Monday, Sept. 1.