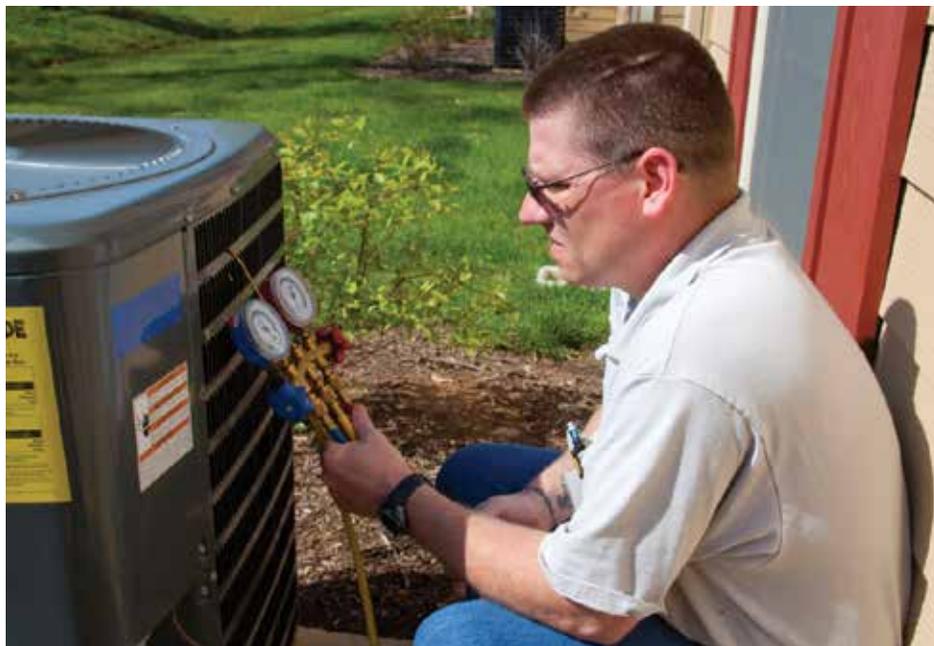


CIRCUITS

NEWS FOR DAKOTA ELECTRIC MEMBERS



Is it time for a tune-up?

Local contractor explains the importance of tuning up your central air conditioner or air-source heat pump

Jerry Brockman, co-owner of Controlled Air in Farmington, has been in the heating and cooling business for nearly 40 years. We asked him about the importance of regular service maintenance for your central air conditioner or air-source heat pump (ASHP).

Why is a tune-up important?

In the long run it can save time and money. You can schedule a tune-up at your convenience rather than needing an emergency service call at an inconvenient time. A tune-up ensures that your unit continues to run efficiently, which in turn lowers operating cost. It can increase the life of the equipment with less chance of a major component failure.

What are some things you check for during a tune-up?

There are various things we look for, but mainly we check refrigerant levels

- continued on page 3

Save on cooling costs with these programs and rebates

Residential

- Cooling system rebates
 - » Up to \$330 on a central air conditioner quality installation
 - » Up to \$630 on an air-source heat pump quality installation
 - » \$400 per ton on a ground-source heat pump installation
 - » \$25 on a cooling system tune-up by your contractor
- \$79.95 cooling system tune-up by a contractor assigned by Dakota Electric or a \$25 rebate for a contractor of your choice
- Cycled Air Conditioning® bill credit of \$13 every June, July and August

Commercial

- Heat pumps
- AC tune-ups
- Chillers
- Cooling towers
- Cycled Air
- Rooftop units
- Condensing units
- Split systems
- Variable air volume (VAV/AHU)
- Economizers
- PTAC/ASHP

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Upcoming events

Comm. Member Lunch & Learn	May 3
Energy Trends Expo	May 3
GreenTouch	May 7
MN Twins Youth Baseball Clinic	May 14
Board Meeting	May 26, 8:30 a.m.

May 2016



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Why we plan outages

Routine, scheduled maintenance is necessary to keep Dakota Electric's system

Have you ever received a notification from Dakota Electric informing you of a "planned outage?" You may have wondered, "what is a planned outage?" and "why does my electric utility need to perform one?"

Occasionally, the equipment used to bring power to your home needs to be replaced, repaired or updated. When this happens, as a way to keep our crews and you safe, the cooperative plans an interruption to your electric service.

"We do our best to plan these outages during times when you will be least inconvenienced," said John Thurmes, Dakota Electric's system control manager. "Planned outages are often a necessary step in large system-improvement projects. While inconvenient at the time, the end result will be safer, more reliable service."

Regular system upgrades are necessary for optimal performance, and they increase reliability. Repairing and upgrading our equipment is also critical to maintaining public safety. If older lines need to be replaced, we plan for it, repair or replace it, and that keeps everyone safe.

Planned outages also allow us to keep you informed of when and how long you will be without power. We attempt to notify you before a planned outage, so you can be prepared.

"At Dakota Electric, we want to make sure we are doing everything we can to keep you safe and to keep our system running smoothly," added Thurmes. "So, the next time you hear about a planned outage, know that it is one of the best ways we can provide you with quality electric service."



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Is it time for a tune-up? (cont.)

and pressure, clean the condenser coil, tighten electrical connections, inspect the condensate drain and check the controls of the system to ensure proper and safe operation.

When is the best time to get a tune-up?

The best time is in early spring when the outside temperature is above 65 degrees.

How often should people have their cooling system tuned up?

Once a year is recommended by the manufacturer to keep warranties valid.

Are there things homeowners can do to help with the maintenance of their air conditioner or ASHP?

We suggest covering just the top of the outdoor air conditioning unit after the cooling season to avoid leaves, debris and ice buildup; always make sure long grass and bushes are trimmed back away from your unit; DO NOT cover your air-source heat pump, as that can be used year-round as part of your home comfort system.

Dakota Electric offers \$25 tune-up rebate

For more details and to download the rebate form, visit dakotaelectric.com/residential/programs/rebates and click on Heating & Cooling Rebates or call the Energy Experts® at 651-463-6243.

Make the most of ceiling fans

By turning on the fan, you can turn up the savings!

If you are like most Americans, you have at least one ceiling fan in your home. Ceiling fans help our indoor life feel more comfortable. They are a decorative addition to our homes and, if used properly, can help lower energy costs.

Flip the switch

Most ceiling fans have a switch near the blades. In warm months, flip the switch so the blades operate in a counter clockwise direction, effectively producing a "wind chill" effect. In winter, move the switch so the fan blades rotate clockwise, creating a gentle updraft. This pushes warm air down from the ceiling into occupied areas of the room.

Adjust your thermostat

In the summer, when using a ceiling fan in conjunction with an air conditioner, or instead of it, you can turn your thermostat up a few degrees without any reduction in comfort. This saves money since a ceiling fan is less costly to run than an air conditioner. In the winter, lower your thermostat's set point by the same amount. Ceiling fans push warm air from the ceiling back down toward the living space, which means the furnace won't turn on as frequently.

Choose the right size

Make sure your ceiling fan is the right size for the room. A fan that is 36-44 inches in diameter will cool rooms up to 225 square feet. A fan that is 52 inches or more should be used to cool a larger space.

Turn it off

When the room is unoccupied, turn the fan off. Ceiling fans are intended to cool people — not rooms.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)



Electrical safety tips

In honor of electrical safety month, Dakota Electric reminds members to keep the following safety tips in mind:

1. Understand your home's electrical system. Make a map showing which fuse or circuit breaker controls each switch, light or outlet.
2. Consider purchasing surge protectors with cable and phone jacks to provide protection to your phone, computer modem and television.
3. Check ceiling fans regularly for wobble, which will wear out the motor over time. To fix the wobble, turn off power to the ceiling fan and tighten the screws.
4. Use correct bulb wattage in fixtures. Light bulbs with wattages that are too high for the light fixture can overheat the fixture and start a fire.
5. Heavy reliance on power strips is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs. Have additional outlets installed by a qualified, licensed electrician.
6. Assume that all overhead wires are energized at lethal voltages. Never assume that a wire is safe to touch even if it is down or appears to be insulated.
7. If working in damp locations, inspect electric cords and equipment to ensure that they are in good condition and free of defects, and use a ground-fault circuit interrupter.
8. Recurring tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses can signify a serious electrical problem. Contact a licensed electrician.
9. When working outside, use a wooden or fiberglass ladder. Keep the ladder at least 10 feet away from power lines. Never touch anyone or anything in contact with a downed wire. Power lines may be live; stay a safe distance away.
10. If you find yourself near a downed power line, the proper way to move away from it is to shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times.

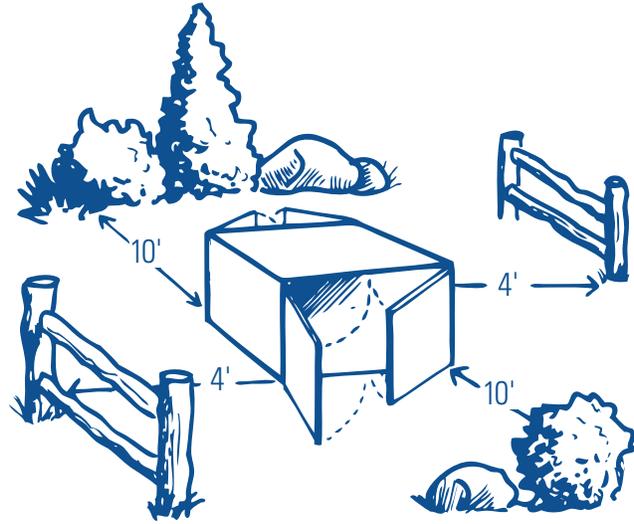
Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), National Fire Protection Association

Plan your planting to prevent power outages

Landscaping is a great way to increase the value of your property and save energy, but trees and shrubs planted too close to power lines and other electrical equipment can create both safety and reliability concerns.

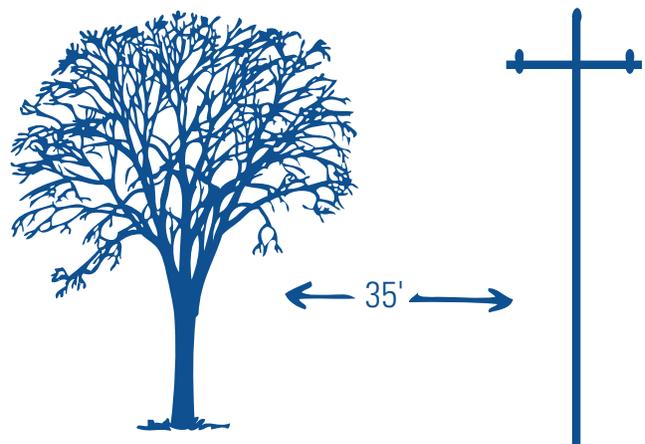
Planting near electrical boxes

When fully mature, trees and shrubs should be at least 10 feet away from the electric box door and four feet away from all sides. This is needed for personnel to safely operate and maintain the equipment.



Planting near power lines

If trees have a mature height of more than 15 feet, plant them at least 35 feet away from electric utility poles and wires. Trees and shrubs with a mature height less than 15 feet can be planted closer, but make sure the plants will not be in the way of crews making repairs.



For more information

Visit dakotaelectric.com/residential/resources and click on Tree Trimming and Planting. You can download Dakota Electric's tree planting guidelines brochure, as well as The Right Tree, a guide to proper tree selection and planting near power lines.

Summer storm season is upon us

Know what to do during a power outage

When the lights go out, Dakota Electric crews are hard at work finding ways to restore power for our members.

"The first priority is always safety," said Bernie Kolnberger, Dakota Electric's utility services manager. "Crews give immediate attention to dangerous situations, such as power lines down on roadways or streets. Typically, local police or fire station personnel are called to secure the area until our crews can restore power to the area. Sometimes tree crews must clear tree branches or limbs from the area before repairs can be made."

Dakota Electric crews work with employees from Great River Energy, our wholesale electric supplier, to restore power quickly and safely during a transmission outage.

While they are working to restore your power, consider the five following tips:

1. Stay away from downed power lines.
2. Treat all power lines as though they're energized.
3. If you run over a downed power line, stay in your vehicle and call 911.
4. If you use a backup generator, follow the instructions in the owner's manual for safe operation.
5. Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed to maintain a cool temperature.

"We want all of our members to be safe during an outage, which involves taking the time to ensure you know how to use your backup generator and avoid downed power lines," said Kolnberger.

For more information on staying safe during a power outage, visit dakotaelectric.com/safety-education/electric_safety. You can view quick videos on power restoration, how to prepare an emergency kit, and food safety during a power outage.

Make sure we have your current phone number(s) on file!



When you call in to report an outage, Dakota Electric's automated outage call answering system will check to see if the number you are calling from matches a number in our database. If a match is found, the system will tell you if dispatchers are aware of your outage and record your telephone number, call time and address location. If you call from a number that is not recognized in our system database, you will be asked to leave a message, and it will take more time to confirm the affected outage. **Call 651-463-6212 to update the phone number(s) on your account.**

WE KEEP THEM UP HERE FOR A REASON.

STAY CLEAR OF DOWNED POWER LINES.

A downed power line may not be a dead line. It could cause serious injury or death.

Call 911 to report a downed line and keep others away until help arrives.



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Remember that power lines are underground as well.

State law requires anyone planning to dig to contact **Gopher State One Call.**

Doing so protects you and your property. Call **811** or visit gopherstateonecall.org.



Know what's below. Call before you dig.





Circuits Quick Clips

Area students traveling to Washington, D.C. in June

Dakota Electric is sponsoring five local high school students to attend the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) annual Youth Tour event in June. The students were selected after going through an application and interview process with a panel of judges.

Every year, more than 1,200 high school students from around the country travel to Washington, D.C. for the NRECA Youth Tour. During the week-long trip, students learn about the nation's government and electric cooperatives, meet with their elected officials and make friends with other students from around the United States. Students will tour many of Washington, D.C.'s historic sites, including the Smithsonian, the FBI building and the Vietnam Memorial.

"We have a lot quality students in our area and our judges always have a hard time narrowing it down to just five to go on the trip," said Peggy Johnson, Dakota Electric's community relations director. "We thank all the students for applying."



Jenna Conzemius
Cretin-Derham Hall High School



Sarah Crippes
Apple Valley High School



Emily Haberlack
Burnsville High School



Liesl Larson
Christian Life Academy



Erin Mayer
Eastview High School

Support wind and solar power with Wellspring Renewable Energy®

Wellspring is a voluntary program offered to members who want to provide additional support for renewable energy technologies.

How does Wellspring work?

Wellspring is sold in 100 kWh blocks, and members can purchase a fixed number of blocks each month or enough to power their monthly electricity use. You have two options:

OPTION 1: Choose a fixed number of 100 kWh blocks to purchase each month. You can purchase just wind energy, just solar energy, or a combination of both. You cannot purchase more than your minimum monthly use over the past 12 months.

OPTION 2: Let the number of blocks you purchase each month fluctuate based on the amount of energy you use. You must choose either wind energy or solar energy with this variable option.

How much does Wellspring cost?

- Each 100 kWh block of wind energy costs an extra \$0.40* per month.
- Each 100 kWh block of solar energy costs an extra \$2* per month.

Contact an Energy Expert® at 651-463-6212 for details and to enroll.

**Price and program subject to change without notice.*



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For more electrical safety tips, see page 4.

#ElectricalSafetyMonth

Contact Us

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651-463-6212 or 1-800-874-3409
Minnesota Relay Service 711

Lobby 7 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday
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24-hour outage & emergency service
651-463-6201 or 1-800-430-9722

Underground cable locations
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1-800-252-1166

Tree trimming & street lights 651-463-6287

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