

energy

CONNECTIONS

February 2009

NorthWestern
Energy
Delivering a Bright Future

in this issue...

HIGH BILLS EXPLAINED

HELP IS AVAILABLE

NORTHWESTERN EMPLOYEES ACHIEVE
SAFETY MILESTONE

TAX CREDITS AVAILABLE IN 2009

DID YOU KNOW?

Help Is Available

NorthWestern encourages any customer who might need help this heating season, to take advantage of the energy assistance programs that are available for those that are income-qualified. Find out if a program would apply to you, by visiting your local Human Resource Development Council office, calling our Customer Contact Center, or logging on to our Web site.

NorthWestern encourages all customers – regardless of income – to continue taking steps to make their homes more energy efficient. The winter heating season has been harsh so far and will continue to take a bite out of many families' already tight budgets. By making a home more energy efficient, you will have a long-lasting benefit of keeping the heat in during the winter and giving your furnace a much-needed rest.

Take advantage of NorthWestern's billing and payment options as well. Programs such as budget billing allow you to pay the same amount each month.

Additionally, log-on to Calc-U-Pal at www.northwesternenergy.com and find the areas in your home where you can take some simple steps, such as unplugging a device when it's not being used that can add up to money saved on your utility bill.

If you find yourself getting behind on your energy bill, call our Customer Contact Center right away – don't wait until your account balance is long overdue, and the payment amount is too large for you to handle. Our Customer Service Representatives will work with you to set up a reasonable payment schedule, so you can avoid having your services disconnected. ■



High Bills Explained

Because of the extent and severity of our winter weather so far, the company is reminding customers to expect higher than normal heating bills.

NorthWestern Energy's entire service territory has been hit with long periods of frigid temperatures and blowing wind. The average temperature during December in Helena, Mont., was 20 degrees Fahrenheit, and Missoula, Mont., averaged 21.3 F in December. South Dakota also experienced colder weather in December – in Huron, S.D., the average temperature for the last 48 days was a mere 11.4 F including one day where the mercury dropped to 30 F below zero and a chilling 42 F below zero was recorded in Aberdeen.

"Your heating system works harder and therefore uses more electricity and natural gas when it is extremely cold outside," said Frank Spangler – Director of Customer Interaction. "Even though you didn't change your thermostat setting inside, your furnace has to keep up with what is going on outside the home, and this year there have been many days in a row with below average temperatures."

Customers with natural gas meters covered in snow, or inaccessible because of snowdrifts or ice, may receive an estimated bill. Customers who receive such an "estimated bill" are likely to see adjustments to their following month's bill once we can obtain an actual meter read. We, at NorthWestern Energy, prefer not to estimate customer usage and make every attempt to provide our customers with billing statements based on actual meter reads each month. You can help by clearing a pathway to, and the area around, your electric and natural gas meters. That way we can obtain a meter reading based on your actual usage – not an estimate.

We also encourage our customers to call as soon as possible about problems or questions regarding their accounts. ■

Anybody Can Serve

January 19, 2009, marked the first annual National Day of Service. The National Day of Service is part of a broader effort spearheaded by the National Association of Regulatory Commissions and championed by a number of different utility industry and advocacy partners, which includes NorthWestern Energy, to raise awareness of energy efficiency and conservation activities.

The *Anybody Can Serve...So Let's Conserve* campaign is intended to increase energy efficiency by making conservation efforts more accessible, affordable and practical. In addition to serving in your own home, the Anybody Can Serve effort highlights the fact that anyone can help neighbors needing assistance with energy conservation measures. For more information on how you can get involved with the National Day of Service or the Anybody Can Serve campaign, please visit www.anybodycanserve.org. ■



NorthWestern Energy is proud to
provide reliable service...



safely.

At NorthWestern Energy, we want all our employees to return home safely – every day. We are proud of their hard work and dedication in providing our customers with reliable service and even more proud that this year they have met and exceeded their goals to perform their jobs safely.

We congratulate our almost 1,400 employees. In 2008, they performed their work in a safe and efficient manner and with a minimum of safety related incidents.

We celebrate this achievement and our employees' commitment not only to their safety but also to the safety of everyone around them. Job well done!

NorthWestern
Energy

Delivering a Bright Future

contact

MONTANA

Customer Contact Center	
7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F	(888) 467-2669
Emergency 24/7 Service	
Electric	(888) 467-2353
Natural Gas	(888) 467-2427
Call Before You Dig	811
Energy Efficiency	(800) 823-5995

NEBRASKA

Customer Contact Center	
6 a.m. - 10 p.m. M-F	(800) 245-6977
Emergency 24/7 Service	(800) 245-6977
Call Before You Dig	811

SOUTH DAKOTA

Customer Contact Center	
6 a.m. - 10 p.m. M-F	(800) 245-6977
Emergency 24/7 Service	(800) 245-6977
Call Before You Dig	811

PAYMENT

Automated Phone	
Payment Option:	(800) 218-4959
(via checking, savings, or money market account)	

SpeedPay Automated	
Phone Payment Option:	(877) 361-4927
(via credit card account)	

did you know?

How much do you know about energy efficiency? Take this multiple-choice energy efficiency quiz for fun to find out!

1. What symbol indicates a product is energy efficient?
 - a. Heart.
 - b. Lighting bolt.
 - c. Energy star.
 - d. Exclamation point.
2. What are the best materials to help seal air leaks?
 - a. Newspaper and glue.
 - b. Bubble gum.
 - c. Window plastic, foam gaskets, caulk and weather stripping.
 - d. Styrofoam and cotton batting.
3. A CFL uses less energy than a traditional incandescent light bulb. How much less?
 - a. 30% less
 - b. 10% less
 - c. 50% less
 - d. 75% less
4. What kind of thermostat should you use to help save energy?
 - a. One you bought at a yard sale.
 - b. Your neighbor's.
 - c. A programmable thermostat.
 - d. A digital thermostat.
5. What is phantom load?
 - a. The amount of power your cell phone battery has left when one low bar appears on the screen.
 - b. Electricity consumed by any device that is switched off while plugged in.
 - c. A burst of power.
 - d. A term used in the utility business around Halloween. ■

Answers to the Quiz... (1.) c (2.) c (3.) d (4.) c (5.) b

Tax Credits Available in 2009

On October 3, 2008, President Bush signed into law the "Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008."

This bill extended tax credits for energy efficient home improvements (windows; doors; roofs; insulation; heating, ventilating and air conditioning system; and non-solar water heaters). Tax credits, for these residential products, had expired at the end of 2007 and now will be available for improvements made during 2009. However, improvements made during 2008 are not eligible for a tax credit.

The bill also extended tax credits for solar energy systems and fuel cells to 2016. New tax credits were established for small wind energy systems and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. Tax credits for builders of new energy efficient homes and tax deductions for owners and designers of energy efficient commercial buildings also were extended.

To find out if one of your energy efficiency investments is eligible for a tax credit, visit www.energystar.gov for more information and a complete listing of qualifications. ■