

energy

CONNECTIONS

May 2009

NorthWestern
Energy
Delivering a Bright Future

in this issue...

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DID YOU KNOW?

Always Call Before You Dig

Building a deck? Planting a tree? Installing a new fence? Call 811 before you begin any digging project.

The United States has a vast underground infrastructure of pipelines, conduits, wires and cables that are critical to our way of life. This infrastructure provides the nation with crude oil, refined petroleum products, natural gas, telecommunications, electricity, water, sewage, cable TV and other vital products and services.

One of the leading causes of disruption to the nation's underground facilities, recognized by both industry and government, is "external force damage" that occurs during excavation activities. Such damage is usually preventable, and responsibility for preventing underground facility damage is shared by all stakeholders. Advanced planning, effective use of one-call systems, accurate locating and marking of underground facilities and the use of safe-digging practices can all be very effective in reducing underground facility damage.

Whether you are planning to do it yourself or hire a professional, smart digging means calling 811 before each job. Homeowners often make risky assumptions about whether or not they should get their utility lines marked, but every digging job requires a call - even small projects like planting trees and shrubs. It's free, it's easy, and it's one call - dial 811. ■



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**



Consumer Safety Alert: Counterfeit Electrical Products

Every day, counterfeit electrical products are finding their way into our homes, businesses, and public institutions. These fraudulent products are causing a significant safety concern for our communities - a concern that requires immediate action.

More than one million counterfeit electrical products, including extension cords, power strips, batteries, and hair dryers, have been recalled in recent years. Perhaps even more shocking is that recent statistics from the Gallup Consulting and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimate that 64 percent of counterfeit electrical products in the United States are purchased from legitimate shops and retailers.

Counterfeit electrical products can be difficult to spot. They can be knock-off versions of brand name products or items that bear an unauthorized certification marking, and may have been made without key components or compliance to relevant safety standards in order to save money. While these shortcuts may offer cost savings, they pose great danger and are not worth the safety risks involved.

May is National Electrical Safety Month, and to help raise awareness, the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) is offering the following safety guidelines to help people everywhere protect against dangerous and defective counterfeit electrical products:

- ◆ Look for the CSA, UL or ETL-SEMKO certification marks. If you have concerns about the marks, contact the certifier.
- ◆ Beware of bargains that seem too good to be true. Products may be cheap because they are counterfeit or defective.
- ◆ Look for the name and contact information of the manufacturer. If this information is missing, consider purchasing electrical products elsewhere.
- ◆ Avoid no-name products that lack brand affiliation.

Be proactive. Organizations such as the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and Underwriters Laboratories (UL) provide information about product recalls on their Web sites.

By working together to promote education and awareness, we can help to prevent devastating injuries, fatalities, and fires that are being caused by counterfeit electrical products. To learn more about ESFI and the 2009 National Electrical Safety Month Buyer Beware Anti-Counterfeiting Campaign, visit www.electrical-safety.org. ■

Tips for Contacting NorthWestern Energy through the Online Form on Our Web Site



Many NorthWestern Energy customers choose to communicate with us through our online Contact Us form, which generates an e-mail message that is sent to one of our internal resident experts for a response. To ensure your message is received and replied to in a timely manner, here are some helpful tips:

- ◆ **Be sure to select the correct subject from the drop-down menu on the form.** If you have a question about your account, for example, and you select General Inquiry instead of Service – Account Inquiry, your question will not be routed to one of our Customer Service Representatives. Instead, it will be routed to the Webmaster who will then have to forward it along. This means that your response from NorthWestern will be delayed.
- ◆ **Make sure your e-mail address is typed correctly.** If you misspell any part of your e-mail address or enter your e-mail address incorrectly, you will not receive a reply. In addition, if you have your e-mail preferences set to allow incoming messages only from approved senders, you will not receive a reply. NorthWestern Energy does not respond to the types of requests shown below:
“To control spam, I now allow incoming messages only from senders I have approved beforehand. If you would like to be added to my list of approved senders, please fill out the short request form (see link below). Once I approve you, I will receive your original message in my inbox. You do not need to resend your message. I apologize for this one-time inconvenience.”
- ◆ **Provide either your account number or service address and either the last four digits of your SSN or your birth date if you need account-related assistance.** Our Customer Service Representatives cannot help you until they have verified that you are the account owner. And your information is secure because NorthWestern uses 128 bit encryption through our Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) certificate.
- ◆ **Indicate your state on the form.** When you indicate where you are located within our service territory, we can make sure your inquiry gets to the right person and you receive a reply in a timely manner.

Always remember – DO NOT use e-mail to report a gas or electric emergency! Call our Customer Contact Centers: in South Dakota and Nebraska, call (800) 245-6977 and in Montana, for gas emergencies, call (888) 467-2427 and for electric emergencies, call (888) 467-2353. ■

Look Up and Look Out

Overhead power lines, including service drops to homes and businesses, can be extremely dangerous and potentially deadly.

If your family has a trampoline, or other outdoor playground equipment, furniture; such as swing sets, picnic tables, or sheds, please take a moment to check their location. Look up and look out – are power lines nearby? If so, please act on the safe side and safely move all items away from any power lines.

Remember this rule when flying kites too. Fly kites in open areas away from power lines and busy streets, using non-metallic string. If the kite or any like-object is moving toward a power line, let go of the string immediately. Don't ever attempt to remove an entangled object from a power line. Contact your utility for assistance and removal if necessary. ■

did you know?

NorthWestern Energy's Web site has a wealth of information for kids, parents, and safety educators. Check out our interactive Web sites to learn about electricity, natural gas, safety, and tips to use energy efficiently.

You can download science project ideas, classroom curriculums, and worksheets. Log-on to www.northwesternenergy.com and click *Energy Education* under the *Community* topic to go to *Kids Korner*, *Electrical Safety World*, or *Natural Gas Safety World*. ■

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)	



March for Babies

The March of Dimes is about all babies, those born healthy and those who need help to survive. Every day, approximately one in eight babies is born too soon. Death or significant, life-long medical problems may result. We don't always know why a woman's labor starts too early, but no one is working harder than the March of Dimes to find the answers.

We, at NorthWestern Energy, understand the importance of children getting a healthy start in life and that's why we're proud to be the 2009 South Dakota and Montana Statewide Sponsors and local Nebraska sponsor of March for Babies. We'll have March for Babies teams across our service territory to help raise funds to support research, education, and advocacy for the babies of Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska.

On behalf of the March of Dimes and all of us at NorthWestern Energy, we urge you to take steps to save babies by participating in March for Babies in your community. Take our walker challenge – by having each member of your team raise \$200 for the March for Babies event in your community.

All babies deserve a healthy start in life and you can help make that difference. To find a March for Babies event in your area, visit www.marchforbabies.org. ■