

energy

CONNECTIONS

March 2010

NorthWestern
Energy
Delivering a Bright Future

in this issue...

'LOOK UP AND LIVE' AND 'CALL BEFORE YOU DIG' SAFETY REMINDERS

SPRINGTIME LEAK SURVEYS

DID YOU KNOW?

TV Give-away Promotion Continues

You still have time to participate in our special promotion that ends March 31. Between now and the end of March, if you sign up for one or more of our billing or payment programs – Budget Billing, EZ Pay or E-Bill – we will enter your name into a free drawing for one of three SAVE MORE ENERGY STAR® rated, 42-inch, flat-screen televisions that is one of the most energy efficient TVs available.

You may sign up for one, two or all three of these programs. We will add your name to the drawing once for each program you select. Learn more about qualifications or restrictions that apply to these programs by visiting us online at www.northwesternenergy.com and search for easy billing, or call us. Montana customers may call (888) 467-2669 and South Dakota and Nebraska customers may call (800) 245-6977.

We will draw names for the three televisions on April 5, 2010. This promotion is open to our customers but excludes employees and their immediate families.



One Number, More Options

Beginning March 6, 2010, Montana customers will have the convenience of dialing one toll-free number – (888) 467-2669 – to report electric or natural gas issues or to receive customer service support. We have combined our three Montana toll-free numbers making it easier than ever for you to call us.

In addition, the Montana toll-free number will connect you to a new interactive voice response (IVR) system. At any time of the day, the IVR gives you the ability to select numerous self-service options like making a payment; requesting a copy of your most recent bill; retrieving your owed balance; hearing your last payment; or finding a payment location near you.

Please give us a call and listen to our new options. You'll find out how easy it is to get the information you need at any time. IVRs are just another tool in our Contact Centers. If you prefer, you still may connect to one of our friendly agents. If by chance you use one of the old numbers, don't worry, you will be routed automatically to our Contact Center.

As always, we will have agents available all day, every day to handle utility emergencies like downed lines, natural gas odor, no heat, carbon monoxide or power outages.

We will be evaluating the success of this technology for expansion to our South Dakota and Nebraska customers in the future.

Regardless of where you live, also remember to call 811 before you dig. One easy phone call starts the free process to get your underground utility lines marked to prevent dangerous and costly contact with buried electric, natural gas, communications, water and sewer lines. For more information, visit www.northwesternenergy.com and search on call 811. ■

EMERGENCY SERVICE AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Service Area	Montana	South Dakota & Nebraska
Toll-free Numbers	(888) 467-2669	(800) 245-6977
Call Before You Dig	811	811

Thanks for Keeping Your Meter Areas Clear

When you're out shoveling snow this winter, remember to clear the area around your electric and natural gas meters as well. Though designed to withstand harsh winter conditions, meters can be damaged by falling ice and excessive snow weight. Try to keep meters free from snow and ice but remember to do so carefully. Never kick, hit or use an open flame near a meter or its piping. A clear path to the meter also helps when we need to read your meter. A meter buried under snow and ice means we have to estimate your energy usage for your bill. Thanks for taking a few minutes to clear the snow from your meter so we can base your next bill on your actual energy usage. ■

'Look Up and Live' and 'Call Before You Dig' Safety Reminders



March 7 – 13 is Agricultural Safety Awareness week, and we want to remind farmers and ranchers in our service area about two simple safety tips – *Look Up and Live* and *Call Before You Dig*.

When at work or play outdoors, look up for overhead power lines before beginning any activity especially when moving oversized vehicles or equipment. Remember the 10-foot circle of

safety rule and keep everyone and everything – tools, materials, equipment and you – at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines. Make the safety circle even bigger for higher voltage electric lines. Assume all overhead lines, including service drops that run from utility poles to buildings, are energized and dangerous.

If your tractor, truck, combine or other equipment makes contact with a power line, move the equipment away from the line if you can do so safely. If you cannot move the equipment, warn others to stay away and call 911 and NorthWestern Energy. As long as the equipment is in contact with the electric line, stay in or on the equipment until utility workers de-energize the line and say it is safe. If you must get off the equipment, jump clear keeping both feet together while maintaining your balance. Because there could be hazardous voltage differential in the ground, take extreme care to avoid touching the equipment and the ground at the same time. Once you are off the equipment, keep your feet together and hop or shuffle slowly until you are at least 30 feet away. Avoid – under any circumstances – taking large steps that might make it possible for one foot to be in a high voltage area and the other to be in a lower voltage area.

Working around buried natural gas lines poses additional safety challenges. At least two days before you dig or move dirt in any way, call 811 to request a free locate of all underground utilities including natural gas lines.

Steps for safe excavation:

1. Mark your proposed excavation or dig area with white paint.
2. Call 811 at least two days before you plan to work.
3. Wait until the utilities are located before moving any dirt.
4. Maintain the locate marks so you can see them throughout your project.
5. Hand excavate within 24 inches on each side of marked utilities.

If your equipment contacts a natural gas line, immediately turn off the equipment and get away. An operating engine or motor can be an ignition source for leaking natural gas. Warn others to stay away and call 911 and NorthWestern Energy. Do not attempt to turn off the flow of gas at any pipeline valve and leave the ditch open.

Look Up and Live and *Call Before You Dig* are simple phrases that go a long way to make farms and ranches safer for farmers, their family members and employees. ■

did you know?

In March 2010, millions of addresses nationwide will receive a census questionnaire: 10 questions, 10 minutes. The form is easy, important and safe. Your participation is essential to ensuring a brighter tomorrow for all our communities. Census results may affect how the more than \$400 billion per year in federal funding is distributed to tribal, state and local governments that in turn affect programs like low-income energy assistance, economic development, roads and schools. Please note that the Census Bureau will not request information via e-mail nor will it request any personal information such as Social Security numbers, codes or passwords, credit card number or other personal financial account information. ■

contact...

MONTANA

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

NEBRASKA

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

SOUTH DAKOTA

Customer Contact Center (800) 245-6977
7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F
Emergency 24/7 Service
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)

Springtime Leak Surveys

In just a few weeks, we will begin sending employees and contractors out to perform physical checks of our natural gas pipelines and related equipment. The inspectors are looking for possible gas leaks, washouts, dead vegetation and odors – anything out of the ordinary related to our buried natural gas lines that needs to be repaired or checked out in detail.

They also perform minor maintenance, such as repainting the posts that mark right of ways and replacing signs. This is part of our regular inspection to make certain our natural gas system meets the standards required by the federal Department of Transportation.

Sometimes these employees may need to access your property to complete the survey. Our professional inspectors drive clearly marked vehicles and wear clothing that identifies them as NorthWestern Energy employees or contractors. They also carry appropriate identification; however, please alert the authorities and us immediately if you witness suspicious activity around any of our facilities. ■