



# ENERGY CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 2015 - NEBRASKA

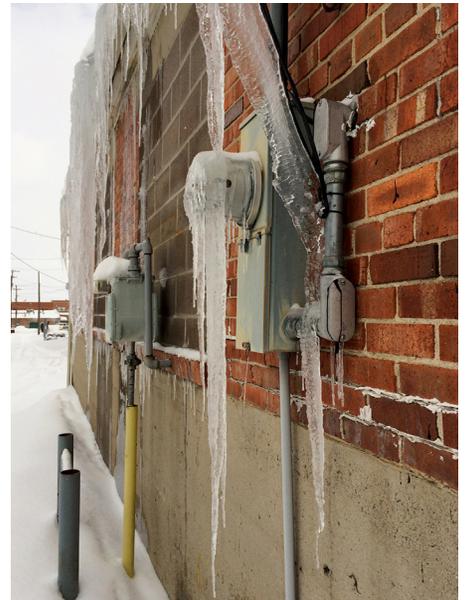
## Stay warm and safe

It's extremely important to keep your outdoor natural gas meter clear of snow and ice. Carefully remove snow or ice from the gas meter and any associated piping and take care not to cover meters when shoveling or snow-blowing. Also, check to ensure that melting snow or ice is not dripping on the meter from the roof or nearby trees, and that the meter is clear following rooftop snow removal.

The natural gas meter's outdoor regulator vent must always be clear so that the flow of natural gas into the home can be regulated properly. If this vent becomes plugged when snow and ice on or above the meter melts and re-freezes, the pressure of gas being pumped into the home could either increase or decrease to a dangerous level, resulting in a fire or explosion.

You should check for any ice buildup around all external vents as well as your dryer vents. If you have a gas dryer, ice can keep harmful gases from escaping your home. Any airflow blockage can lead to big problems and even carbon monoxide poisoning.

Be safe and take extra precautions after major storms. Remember we provide 24/7 emergency service, so never hesitate to call (800) 245-6977.



## Know the signs

Stay safe and help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Natural gas isn't poisonous, but like other fuels, it produces carbon monoxide gas as it burns, and the carbon monoxide must be vented properly. It is important to use natural gas safely and to know what to do in an emergency. Make sure furnace and appliance vents are clear of obstructions and working properly to vent carbon monoxide from your residence. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, tasteless, invisible gas. Similar to the flu, the first indications of carbon monoxide poisoning are dizziness, fatigue, nausea, mental confusion, and heart palpitations.

If you suspect someone is suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Get the person into fresh air.
- Open doors and windows.
- Seek medical attention immediately.
- Call 911

Properly equip your home or business with a carbon monoxide detector. You'll find one at almost any home improvement or hardware store. Having a carbon monoxide detector will give you an added sense of security. Also, to follow the manufacturer's instructions when placing a detector in your home.

A new year is a perfect time to perform a battery check around your home or business. Keeping fresh batteries in your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms promotes peace of mind, not to mention avoiding that annoying chirping sound!

## Make a resolution to save

The number one New Year's Resolution is to save money, and while many financial experts recommend increasing savings, investing or getting out of debt; one thing to consider would be a resolution to save money and energy. Not only does saving money on energy bills provide you with the best return on your most valuable investment – your home, but it also increases your comfort. Here are some easy ways you can save money and energy in the New Year...

### *Heating your home*

- Set your thermostat to 68 degrees when you are home during the day and reduce it a few degrees at night or when you are away. Wear warm clothes like sweaters, or get cozy and comfortable with a blanket.
- Don't block heating registers. Move furniture to allow heat to flow freely and make sure all return air openings are unobstructed.
- Have your heating system professionally serviced to ensure everything is working properly
- Restrict the use of your wood fireplace in extremely cold weather as it can rob your home of heat provided by your heating system. When the fireplace is not in use, be sure the damper is closed.

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#### Heating your water

- Install aerating, low-flow faucets and showerheads.
- Repair any leaky faucets or drips.
- Check the thermostat on your water heater; a setting of 120 degrees provides comfortable hot water for most uses.
- Insulate all accessible hot water pipes, especially within ten feet of the water heater. Insulation reduces heat loss and can keep water temperatures 2 degrees to 4 degrees hotter than un-insulated pipes do, allowing you to lower your water temperature setting. On addition, hot water will be delivered more quickly, which helps conserve water. Polyethylene or neoprene foam pipe sleeves are the most commonly used insulation. Match the pipe sleeve's inside diameter to the pipe's outside diameter for a snug fit. Place the pipe sleeve so the seam faces down on the pipe. Keep insulation at least six inches from the flue.
- Wrap the water heater tank with an insulating blanket to help hold heat in the tank. Follow the installation instructions.

For more energy-saving tips, visit [NorthWesternEnergy.com](http://NorthWesternEnergy.com).

## Analyze your bill

NorthWestern Energy's online home energy calculator can help you identify the major causes of changes in your energy use. This tool will also suggest ways to reduce energy use and lower bills. It details how your bill was impacted by weather, billing days, average cost, daily usage, and other factors. Plus, you can compare previous bills to learn how to adjust your usage and keep costs in check.

Check out how your energy use compares and you might be surprised to find little ways you can save. Go to [NorthWesternEnergy.com](http://NorthWesternEnergy.com) and search "home energy calculator".



## Consumer notice: scam alert

Scammers are increasingly posing as the utility company and other "energy savers" to try and get your money or sensitive information for fraudulent purposes. We've had customer reports of various scam activity throughout our service area. Please keep the following tips in mind:

- NorthWestern Energy sends hard copy bills in the mail.
- If you've previously arranged to get statements online, you will receive an email message advising your statement is available.
- We do not email utility bills to our customers. Customers that have enrolled in our paperless bill option will be notified via email that their utility bill is available for viewing through their NorthWestern Energy Online Customer Care account at [www.northwesternenergy.com](http://www.northwesternenergy.com).
- Don't respond to unexpected email messages from senders you don't know. A scam email may look very similar to one from a legitimate business. Don't click on links or open attachments you don't recognize. Doing so could put malware on your computer.
- We will never call and demand payment via a prepaid debit card. Prepaid debit cards are becoming an increasingly popular method of payment for scammers. Wire transfer services have tightened their security, so crooks have turned to these prepaid cards instead. The cards are difficult to trace, and you do not need photo identification to collect or spend the money. Be sure you treat a prepaid debit card like cash and remember that transactions cannot be reversed.
- Customers who are behind on bill payment receive several written past-due notices prior to any actual disconnection. We never call demanding payment – that is one of the most common utility scams.

Scams can be convincing. They may use "spoofing" software that lets them falsely display the name and phone number of NorthWestern Energy on your Caller ID. If you get a cancellation notification (especially by phone), always verify it by dialing the customer service number on your utility bill. Don't give any information to the caller.

Have you been told you qualify for a 15 to 20 percent discount on your utility bill if you'll provide your customer account number? Don't do it. If it sounds too good to be true, it likely is.

NorthWestern Energy will never arrive unannounced on your doorstep offering a free inspection or evaluation of your home. You have to initiate a request for an audit and an appointment for any service work would be pre-scheduled. The only exception to this rule would be in the case of an emergency. However, it is likely that additional emergency personnel would be on-site at the time as well. NorthWestern Energy employees and contractors carry identification on them at all times.

## Contact us...

### 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)

**CONNECT WITH US** Follow or like us on your favorite social network to stay up-to-date on the latest company happenings.



**NorthWestern**  
Energy  
Delivering a Bright Future