

**BURT COUNTY**

**PUBLIC POWER**

PO Box 209  
Tekamah, NE 68061

*It's Your Power!*



## June 2021 Energywise Tip: Dehumidifiers

By: *Energy Efficiency Program Manager Cory Fuehrer*

Summertime in Nebraska. Anyone experiencing a few can tell you they can be hot. If they are from eastern Nebraska, they can also tell you humidity makes those summer days feel even sweltering. While air-conditioning systems are tasked with removing most of this excess indoor humidity, many homes and businesses use stand-alone dehumidifiers to lower levels.

To keep comfortable during the summer, the Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends a humidity level between 30 and 50%, while the Environmental Protection Agency recommends between 30 and 60%. In addition to eliminating the muggy, clammy feeling indoors, additional dehumidification can provide the following benefits:

- Improved air quality
- Lessened allergy and asthma symptoms
- Mold prevention
- Diminished musty odors
- Reduced airborne dust
- Dust mite suppression
- Protection of the home's or building's structural integrity

However, not everyone realizes the impact dehumidifiers can have on summer utility bills. For each dehumidifier used, the monthly expense will often run from \$15 to \$35, but it can exceed \$50 per month if the unit runs frequently. Here are some ideas of how to manage humidity problems while saving money.

- Set the humidistat so the dehumidifier does not run continuously. For basements in the summertime, 50% relative humidity is recommended. In colder weather, relative humidity between 25 and 40% is advised to reduce condensation on windows.
- Close all windows and doors to the area being conditioned to dramatically reduce humidity coming from outside air.
- Place the dehumidifier in the area with the highest humidity, but do not create a safety hazard by placing it in or near water. Dehumidifiers are not the solution to standing water (or running water) in basements.
- Make sure the dehumidifier is away from the wall or furniture so air can freely circulate through the unit.
- Hook up a hose to drain the dehumidifier if emptying the tank is a chore.
- If frost forms on the coils, turn off the machine until it melts. Frost can form when the room temperature drops below 65 degrees F. Note that automatic defrost feature is a must-have for anybody who plans to use their device in colder climates.
- Keep the dehumidifier clean. Wipe or vacuum dust and dirt from the coils and fan.
- If you have a choice of fan speeds, higher speeds are more efficient, though lower speeds are quieter.
- Reduce energy use during peak electric use periods. Put your dehumidifier on a timer to turn it on at 9 p.m. and off at 10 a.m.

Finally, when you are shopping for a dehumidifier, purchase an ENERGY STAR-qualified model. A dehumidifier that has earned the ENERGY STAR label uses more efficient refrigeration coils, compressors and fans to remove the same amount of moisture as a similarly-sized conventional unit, but uses nearly 15% less energy.

Your local utility and Nebraska Public Power District want to help you stay cool, comfortable and healthy this summer. Contact them or visit [www.nppd.com](http://www.nppd.com) if you would like more information on ways to improve your energy efficiency, as well as various EnergyWise incentives that may be available to you for implementing energy efficient technologies.

## *Burt's Briefs*

**Labor Day Holiday.** Our office will be closed Monday, September 6th in recognition of Labor Day.

**With harvest just around the corner remember these safety tips:**

- Lower all equipment before passing near or beneath power lines.
- Have a person spot for you when moving large equipment down roads.
- Never attempt to raise or move a power line your self.
- Avoid guy wires. Running into these weakens the support for power lines.
- Show workers and family members potential danger areas. Point out electrical panels to cut off power, show them all danger signs, and overhead lines.
- 75 percent of farm accidents involve tractors or other farm equipment such as augers and power take-offs.
- Know the power line clearance on grain bin services. If you don't know what the National Electrical Safety Code allows, contact our office so we can make sure your bin is in compliance.
- Remember your electric bill will not show a dramatic decrease just because you take your vacation for a couple of weeks. Your meter still has measurers...electric water heater, your refrigerator and freezer, the clocks, attic fans, heating or air conditioning equipment, lights, and TV sets with the "instant-on" feature.

# Groundbreaking solar-storage facility now operational in Burt County

## Courtesy of Mark Jackson and the Burt County Plaindealer

One of the first in the Midwest with a utility-scale storage battery

Burt County Public Power District in partnership with Bluestem Energy Solutions has completed a two-year project that features a 1.4-megawatt AC solar array and a 6-megawatt-hour Tesla Megapack battery storage system.

The two entities hosted a ribbon-cutting Friday morning, June 4, to show the new facility to the public.

The solar-plus-storage project, located about five miles north of Tekamah along Highway 75, is one of the first installations in the Midwest to feature the Tesla battery system. It also is the first solar and utility-scale battery storage system to be built in tandem in Nebraska.

“Nebraska has seen solar arrays built and batteries built, and even batteries connected to solar arrays,” said Will Crane, Director of Product Management for Bluestem. “However, this is the first utility-scale project built in Nebraska with solar and battery being designed and built at the same time specifically sized to work together to deliver the most value to the utility.”

Crane said the local generation facility will help deliver more price certainty both for BCPPD, but also for its ratepayers.

Developed by Bluestem Energy Solutions and constructed by Boyd Jones Construction Company, the project is now operational in BCPPD’s service territory.

The solar-plus-storage project consists of a battery storage system and two solar array sites located in Burt and Dodge counties, which will provide a tax boost to both counties. The battery storage systems will enable the interconnected, renewable energy facilities to become a dispatchable resource during peak hours.

Crane said multiple site development is most common on projects that interconnect to the distribution network.

“Distribution lines typically have less capacity than higher voltage transmission lines, therefore it makes sense to spread projects across multiple sites to enlarge the size of the project, without producing too much energy for a specific distribution circuit,” he said.

The Tesla Megapack is a utility-scale lithium-ion battery storage product installed by Boyd Jones Construction and manufactured at the Gigafactory in Sparks, Nevada. Megapacks store energy generated by intermittent renewable power sources, such as solar and wind.

BCPPD will experience financial value from the project through various load management activities. In addition to the savings to BCPPD, the project will also provide financial benefits to Burt and Dodge counties through the Nebraska nameplate capacity tax. That tax, calculated by taking the nameplate AC generation of the facility and multiplying it by \$3,518, will be paid by Bluestem. Initial calculations show the tax to be just over \$4.9 million which makes it way back to Burt County.

“It’s important to note that the underlying property is still taxed as it was prior to the solar battery project, so this is a true addition to the tax base, not a replacement,” Crane said.

Crane added that the project would not have been built without the partnership with Burt County Public Power.

“In addition to being the sole off-taker for this project, BCPPD was also instrumental in the sizing and optimization of the project,” he said.

“Burt County PPD is excited to continue our partnership with Bluestem during the operation of this solar project,” said the company’s general manager, Jon Dockhorn. “The projected savings and educational opportunities will benefit our customers for years.”

Dockhorn said the local utility’s only risk is the purchase of the electricity generated at the site over the 20 years of the purchase contract.

Until now, the power company didn’t generate any of its own electricity. Instead, it purchased power from Nebraska Public Power District.

Dockhorn said Burt County PPD’s purchase contract with NPPD allows them to buy 10 percent of their electricity from renewable generation sources. The two-site project is expected to generate exactly 10 percent of the company’s power load. As such, it will provide local access for all of the power generated at the two sites.

“We pursued the project to allow our customers to participate in renewable energy without having to put up their own systems,” Dockhorn said, “The plan is to send the electricity out onto the grid and let everybody use it.”

The solar-plus-storage project is partially funded through a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. The Trust is funded by proceeds from the Nebraska Lottery and has awarded more than \$349 million to conservation projects in Nebraska since 1994.

The solar fields will be sown with native grasses and flowers, which will provide a pollinator-friendly habitat. Yale University’s Center for Business and the Environment has published research showing that pollinator-friendly solar power sites can boost nearby crop yields, reduce soil erosion and increase the recharging of groundwater.

“This project is an important step, not only for Bluestem and Burt County Public Power, but for Nebraska in general,” Crane said. “As more renewables come online, battery energy storage systems will play a key role in the continued deployment of renewable energy while providing increased reliability and cost savings.”

Burt County Public Power District is a distribution utility in Nebraska with headquarters in Tekamah. It serves all of Burt County and portions of Cuming, Dodge, Thurston and Washington Counties. Bluestem Energy Solutions is the project developer, as well as owner and operator. Headquartered in Omaha, Bluestem has been developing and operating renewable energy projects in states throughout the country since 2012.



Above Picture: Burt County Public Power District's general manager Jon Dockhorn formally cut the ribbon on the district's new solar generating facility Friday morning. Developed by Omaha firm Bluestem Energy Solutions, the facility includes a 1.4 megawatt AC solar array and a 6 megawatt storage battery. The site is the first solar and utility-scale storage battery system to be built in Nebraska. Also attending the ribbon-cutting were the BCPPD Board of Directors, from left: Scott Lindstrom, Gerald Bohling, Greg Johnson, Mike Williams, Dwane Piere, and Mike Chatt. At the far right is Bluestem President John Crane. *Mark Jackson/Burt County Plaindealer*



Above picture: The new generating facility features panels which not only pivot to follow the sun, they also are capable of capturing solar energy from the back, such as energy reflected off of snow cover. *Mark Jackson/Burt County Plaindealer*

# Nebraska Extension News

By Aaron Nygren , Extension Educator

## How to Terminate a Verbal Farmland Lease

While not as common as they used to be, there are still quite a few verbal farm leases out there. These so called “handshake” agreements are fine as long as everyone is on the same page with respect to what is going to be done by whom, and if everyone agrees on the money involved. However, because nothing is in writing, verbal leases can be challenging if the parties have different recollections of their agreement or if a family member passes away without sharing the lease details. In these situations, lease disputes with a verbal lease are much more difficult to resolve than those involving a written lease.

The most common legal issue associated with verbal farm leases is what is required to legally terminate the lease. For both year-to-year leases and holdover leases, six months advance notice must be given to legally terminate the lease. However, the lease date (the date from which the six months is counted) is different. In contrast, the termination of a written lease is determined by the terms of the written lease.

For year-to-year verbal farmland leases, the Nebraska Supreme Court has ruled that the lease year begins March 1. Working back from that date, notice to a tenant to vacate under a verbal or handshake year-to-year lease (legally referred to as a “notice to quit”) must be given six months in advance of the end of the lease, or no later than September 1. This rule applies regardless of the crop planted, so be careful if a fall crop like wheat is going to be planted.

For example, for the lease year beginning March 1, 2021, and ending February 28, 2022, notice from the landlord that the lease will be terminated would have to be given to (and received by) the tenant no later than September 1, 2021. The lease would then expire February 28, 2022, with the new tenant (or new buyer) able to take over the lease March 1, 2022. If, however, the notice to quit were given (or received) after September 1, 2021, the existing tenant would have the lease until February 28, 2023.

Since the notice must be received by the tenant by September 1, it is recommended that the farmland lease be terminated by Registered Mail. With Registered Mail, the person receiving the letter must sign for it, which provides evidence that the termination notice was received.

Handshake or verbal leases are different for pastures. The typical pasture lease is for the five-month grazing season. The lease is only in effect for that time, so the lease is terminated at the end of the grazing season; however, different lease length arrangements can be made in a written lease, and that would be followed if in effect.

Regardless of the type of lease—written, verbal or even

## Burt County Public Power District News

Tekamah, Nebraska 68061  
Phone 374-2631 or 1-888-835-1620

### Board of Directors

Michael J. Chatt	President
Michael R. Williams	Vice President
Dwane Piere	Treasurer
Greg Johnson	Secretary
Gerald Bohling	Director
Scott Lindstrom	Director
Jonathan Dockhorn	Manager
RVW, Inc.	Engineer
Blankenau Wilmoth LLP	Attorney

### Meetings

In accordance with Nebraska Statute, notice is hereby given that the regular meetings of the Board of Directors of the Burt County Public Power District are held on the 1st Thursday of each month, commencing at 9:30 A.M. at the district office located in Tekamah, Nebraska. In the event that a holiday falls on the said 1st Thursday, the meeting date shall be as set by the Board of Directors and published in the Legal Notice.

An agenda for each regular meeting of the board is available for public inspection during business hours at least three (3) days prior to each meeting; provided however, that the Board of Directors shall have the right to modify the said agenda to include items of an emergency nature.

### Office Hours

7:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

multiple year—the landlord should have clear communication with the tenant. By sending a termination notice before September 1, even for written leases, you can avoid any miscommunication or pitfalls.

In all instances, written leases are preferred over oral or “handshake” leases. Sample leases are available in the Document Library or [aglease101.org](http://aglease101.org) and can help both parties start thinking about the appropriate lease conditions for their situation.

This article was developed using a Crop Watch article written by Jessica Groskopf, Dave Aiken, and Allan Vyhnalek.

For more information, feel free to give me a call at 402-352-3821, e-mail me at [anygren2@unl.edu](mailto:anygren2@unl.edu), follow me on Twitter at [@colfaxcountyext](https://twitter.com/colfaxcountyext), or contact your local Nebraska Extension office.

