

BURT COUNTY

PUBLIC POWER

PO Box 209
Tekamah, NE 68061

It's Your Power!



Why is My Power Out? When Power Goes Out, We Are Working Hard to Restore It

We hate it when power goes out just as much as you do. When there is an outage, we work hard to resume service as quickly and safely as possible.

Many times, the reason for outages are beyond our control. Here are the main reasons the power goes out:

1. **STORMS** — Conditions brought on by storms such as high winds, ice and lightning can interrupt service. Lightning itself does not impact outages as much as people think, but it can strike trees and cause branches or even whole trees to fall on distribution lines. Lightning can cause a problem, however, if it strikes substation equipment, such as a large transformer. Strong high winds and ice that accumulates on lines can also impact distribution.
 2. **TREES AND VEGETATION** — Branches, limbs or trunks can fall on lines and vegetation (such as vines) can grow around poles, lines or other equipment. Ice and wind can make matters worse. This is why we work so hard to keep power lines and equipment clear.
 3. **ANIMALS** — It is estimated that **11 percent** of all outages are caused by our furry friend the squirrel. They love to chew on the weatherproof coating around lines. Other critters like turkeys, snakes and birds can interfere with service too. A bird on a wire is harmless and safe for the bird as long as it touches the line and nothing else.
 4. **ACCIDENTS** — Cars, trucks, and farm equipment that have a run-in with a utility pole can cause an outage.
 5. **PUBLIC DAMAGE** — Unsafe digging, equipment or line damage, vandalism or theft can all cause interruptions in the energy chain.
 6. **OVERLOAD** — This happens when demand spikes, such as when too many air conditioners run on a hot summer day, causing blackouts or brownouts.
 7. **EQUIPMENT ISSUES** — We maintain and inspect all of our lines and equipment regularly; however, sometimes equipment malfunctions. We strive to address any problem as soon as it happens.
- For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Burt's Briefs

Holiday Closing. Our office will be closed Friday, January 1st in recognition of New Year's Day. In case of emergency, please call our toll free number 1-888-835-1620. Thank you!

Report "Clearance" Problems. This is the time of year when a line clearance problem can become a fatality. If you know of a situation anywhere on our lines where clearance is not adequate, let us know. We would rather fix it now, than after it is too late.

Time to Change Filters. This is just a reminder that it is time to change your furnace filter. Actually, we recommend that you change filters once a month in the heavy heating and air conditioning season. This helps air flow through your heating better giving you better efficiency, not to mention your house doesn't get so dusty.

Water Heater Maintenance. You should drain 10 gallons of water from your water heater. This helps remove some of the sediment that can build up in the bottom of your water heater tank, hindering the proper transfer of heat.

Call us to Replace Meter Seals. Sometimes meter seals are removed by electricians for emergency reasons. If this is the case, call us and we will stop by and replace the seal. Customers are not authorized to remove meter seals. In some cases the customer may be suspected of meter tampering if the seal is found missing. Load control boxes also have meter seals and should be intact when boxes are checked. Please check your meter to be sure your seal is intact. If it is not, call us.

Got The Work-From-Home Blues? A Few Tips To Help Keep You Sane

If you joined the masses who began working from home after COVID-19 hit the U.S., or even if you worked from a home office prior to its arrival, you know working from home has its challenges.

As CNBC reported, “It used to be that working remotely was a perk. These days it’s about survival.”

Although statistics vary, an estimated 30 million people have lost jobs during the pandemic so far. For those of us who are fortunate enough to still have a job but now work from home, the days can seem to blend together one into the next.

In addition, work seems to beckon more often and more loudly because it’s physically right there. (It’s kind of like opening your freezer for ice cream versus making a late-night run.)

To keep work and home a little more separate, here are good reminders. Even if you have already tried them, they are worth revisiting:

1. Try to set a workday schedule and stick to it

A set schedule can help for two extremes: for people who are tempted to work too much (burnout, anyone?) or for those who are tempted by a shortened work day or the compulsion to do laundry or other in-home tasks during work hours.

2. Schedule and take breaks

Although it’s tempting to sit at your home desk so long that you have to unstick your legs from the chair, try to schedule a few 5 to 15 minute breaks throughout the day. What is your company’s break policy? Implement it at home. Working non-stop is noble (unless you’re from Sweden) but it actually decreases productivity.

3. Actually leave your house

This should go without saying, but as long as you are feeling well, go do something where you can maintain social distancing. Your body needs fresh air and we could all use a change of scenery at least once a day.

4. Have a dedicated office space

It is ideal (but not possible for everyone) if you can have your own office digs in a separate and private area of the house. If that’s not possible, try to implement other boundaries, such as covering or moving your workspace after hours, especially if it’s in a central hub of the home. Theoretically, this helps to keep work and personal life separate.

5. Reach out for help if you need it

Talk to your supervisor or utilize your employee assistance program when it gets to be too much. As we all keep hearing, this is uncharted territory and the pandemic has brought new and different challenges.

6. Try to create an exercise routine

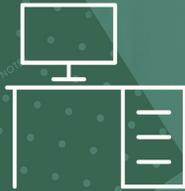
There probably aren’t too many steps from your desk to your couch, and grocery delivery doesn’t require much movement either. To boost mood and to care for your body, make daily or weekly exercise goals. Try to find something you enjoy (and are more likely to stick with) for some much-needed endorphin release.

7. Self-care—what’s that?

For overachievers, self-care can seem like a mirage out in the distance, or, frankly, something for other people. According to job guru Monster.com, 69% of employees are experiencing symptoms of burnout while working from home; and, despite that fact, 59% are taking less time off than they normally would.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR WORKING FROM HOME

TO HELP WITH WORK-LIFE BALANCE



CREATE A DEDICATED SPACE

Not everyone can do this, but it helps if you can have a separate space to keep your work area (and your workday mindset) separate from other areas of the home.

SET A SCHEDULE

Try to set a workday schedule and stick to it as much as possible so that work and home do not constantly intertwine.



CREATE BOUNDARIES

Just as a workspace serves as a physical work boundary, try to set other at-work boundaries: discuss work hours, deadlines and interruption ground rules with others under your roof.

BE REALISTIC

Creating boundaries is more difficult with children and teens around. If you can, try to create a work schedule around their most demanding hours or juggle coverage with another adult.



TAKE A STAND

Researchers at Columbia University found that adults who sit for one to two hours at a time without moving have a higher risk of early death than those who get up more often. Aim to get up and move every 30 minutes.

TAKE BREAKS

Working nonstop might make you feel heroic, but it actually decreases productivity. Consider scheduling brief breaks and taking them – outdoors if possible.



Safe
Electricity.org®

WINTER WEATHER

CAN BRING POWER LINES DOWN



DID YOU KNOW:

STAY WHERE YOU ARE

You've just been in an accident involving a downed power line. Your first instinct might be to get out and run, but that could cost you your life. In most cases, the safest place to be is inside your car or truck. Wait there until electric utility workers deenergize the power. If your car is on fire or you see smoke, escape as safely as possible by making a clean, solid jump out and hop away with both feet together as far as you can. Warn others not to approach the scene.



- That downed power lines are extremely dangerous and even deadly?
- The current could spread throughout the ground and anything touching the ground?
- Stray voltage spreads like ripples on a pond?
- If you step from one "ripple" (voltage) to another you could be electrocuted?
- Downed lines could be hiding under standing water, ice or debris?

Learn more at:

 Safe
Electricity.org®

Nebraska Extension News

By Kathleen Cue , Extension Educator

Pruning Timing Affects Tree Health

No other aspect of tree management can impact tree health like pruning can. The effects of ill-timed and excessive pruning results in tree decline and death. While the old adage “prune when the saw is sharp” has been the guideline for most tree pruning for a long time now, new research indicates that the time of year when trees are pruned has a lasting impact on tree health.

When trees are pruned or injured, trees have a twofold task—isolating decay organisms that enter through wounds and closing wounds through the formation of callus tissue. The area where these functions are occurring is known as the reaction zone. The larger the reaction zone, the longer it takes for trees to grow callus tissue over wounds. Wound exposure to deep cold enlarges reaction zones, slowing down tree defenses and wound closure. Easily the smartest thing to do for tree health is to prune in April, May or June, when small reaction zones mean timely wound closure. For most tree species, the worst time to prune is in late fall or winter, when cold temperatures promote deep and wide reaction zones.

There are two tree species that are exceptions for pruning in April, May or June. Both elm and oak suffers from insect-vectored diseases. Feeding by elm bark beetles (for elm) and picnic beetles (for oak) move the pathogens of Dutch elm disease and oak wilt, respectively, to the wounds created by pruning cuts. These trees should be pruned when insects are not active, so November through February is the best time to prune them to prevent the spread of these diseases.

Ice by itself doesn't damage trees, but the accumulation of ice on branches creates loads that can and do result in branch breakage and complete tree failure. Case in point is the November 2020 ice storm, creating ice coatings in excess of 1/2 inch over tree branches. The weight of ice accumulation was tremendous, surpassing trees' capabilities, resulting in limb breakage and, in some instances, tree loss. While structurally trees develop to handle wind and snow loads, extreme events like ice accumulation and derechos really throw a wrench into tree structural stability.

When it comes to clean-up after a storm event, “hangers”, those limbs that are broken but remain partially connected to the tree, should be removed first, especially if the hangers threaten roofs or people who may be passing below. While it isn't feasible to do all tree pruning in a small time frame, if a storm damaged tree has sentimental value or is an important part of the landscape, ask your arborist about completing the finished cuts and final pruning in April, May or June to promote the tree's timely response to wound closure. Skip any products that tout wound protection when applied to pruning cuts. These aren't effective and actually benefit decay microorganisms.

While ice loads and strong winds can take down the strongest of trees, these events are particularly hard on trees with structural defects. Included bark, trunk cavities and lion's tail pruning are defects conducive to tree failure:

- Tree cavities are caused by wounds to bark, allowing

Burt County Public Power District News Tekamah, Nebraska 68061 Phone 374-2631 or 1-888-835-1620 Board of Directors

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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.

for entry of decay microorganisms that promote wound expansion and wood rot. Wounds may be caused by string trimmers, mowers, wildlife, and insects. For trees with branch cavities, branch removal is feasible to remove decay and structural defects. Once cavities surpass 2/3 of the trunk diameter, whole tree failure is imminent.

- The pruning practice of removing most of the lower branches on the trunk and the upper limbs is known as lions tailing. Lion's tail pruning concentrates wind and snow loads to the ends of branches, where trees are the weakest, leading to branch loss. Most importantly, tree topping does not make trees more structurally stable and actually promotes tree decay.

Remember that the best time to prune trees is in April, May or June, with the exception of elm and oak trees, which may be pruned November through February. For more information on how to make good pruning cuts, follow this link: [pruningmatretrees.pdf \(unl.edu\)](#).

Want to ask questions about your tree? Contact me at the Dodge County Extension Office at 402.727.2775 or kcue2@unl.edu.

