



Prepare for a Season of Safe Boating

The weather is starting to warm up, and it's time to get your boat in order and prepare for a season of safe boating. To ensure a safe season on the water, there are a variety of safety items that you must legally have on board your watercraft—including life vests, fire extinguishers, a throwable floatation device, and property working lights. However, the list should not end there.

Also make sure that the dock area is safe. This means making sure electrical connections are properly installed and safely maintained. Even if you are just renting the dock, it is important that you notify the dock owner of any safety violations so they can be fixed immediately. If the owner will not make the corrections or properly maintain the dock, you might strongly consider moving your boat to a dock that will.

Take the story of a 13-year-old Oklahoma boy who died after he jumped from a boat dock into the lake to swim. The dock lights were on at the time. He immediately surfaced and was screaming, then submerged and did not resurface. An adult who entered the water to assist the boy felt an electrical current and called to others to turn off the dock lights. Power company employees inspected the electrical system for the dock lights, and they identified a short in the wiring. The wiring was in contact with the dock's metal frame and transmitted sufficient electrical current into the water to cause a shock. The medical examiner listed the boy's cause of death as drowning, possibly secondary to electrical shock.

Wet environments are particularly dangerous when it comes to electricity. While regulations might vary by location, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that electricity-related drowning can be prevented by regularly inspecting for ground-fault failure and by strictly enforcing the National Electric Code through frequent inspections of pools and docks.

Safe Electricity urges boat owners to have dockside electrical systems installed by professional electricians guided by National Electric Code and to have these systems inspected regularly to avoid tragedy. Get more information at SafeElectricity.org.



Farmer and Ranch Safety

We don't have to remind those who work the land and raise livestock that they have a potentially dangerous occupation. However, due to the nature of the job, and because of long days and tiring work, here are some reminders about electrical dangers on the farm or ranch.

Overhead Power Lines

If you make contact with a power line, don't get out

If you make contact with a power line, guy wire, power pole, electrical box or any other electrical equipment, do not get out of your cab or truck. Stay put and call 9-1-1 to dispatch the local utility to de-energize the power. If you must get out due to smoke or fire, make a solid jump out without touching any part of the tractor or vehicle, and hop away as far as you can, keeping both feet together as you hop. Another option (after you make a clean exit) is to shuffle or waddle away while keeping your feet together and on the ground.

Once you are out, never try to re-enter the cab or truck.

Remember: *If your machinery or vehicle comes in contact with a power line or utility equipment, do not get out of the cab. Stray power could energize your equipment and the ground. Call 9-1-1 and wait for us to arrive and cut the power so that you can safely exit your tractor or vehicle.*

Determine proper clearance

Contact us to measure power line heights; do NOT do this yourself. Once you know the heights, you can determine appropriate equipment, implement and extension clearances. Always maintain at least 10 feet between the power line and the tallest height of the equipment that will be transported. Keep in mind that due to wear, age and even weather conditions, power lines can change height. Please contact us with any concerns. It's good to know power line clearance, but always have a spotter.

Call us before moving or adding a grain bin

The National Electrical Safety Code addresses grain bins and their proximity to power lines with very specific requirements. The requirements are in place to help keep farmers safe: to decrease the chances of farming equipment and machinery coming in contact with power lines. If you are planning on building a new grain bin or remodeling around an area that already has one, contact **Burt County Public Power at 888-835-1620**.

Always dig safely

Whether you are installing new fence posts or using large tillage tools, call 811 before you dig to have underground utilities marked. Even if you think you know where buried gas, power and other lines are, don't rely on your memory. Get all utilities marked so that you know for sure. Utility locators dispatched by 811 do not mark private lines.

Use standby generators with care

If you have a standby generator to provide essential power during an outage, be sure to correctly use the transfer switch. Once you properly engage the switch, it stops your farm's generated power from entering utility lines, aka back-feeding, which can electrocute lineworkers who are working to restore power.

For more information about electrical safety, visit **SafeElectricity.org**.

General Safety

- Check and maintain equipment, especially electrical cables and hydraulic hoses that have cracks or show other signs of wear.
- Always have someone nearby when entering grain bins or other high-risk areas.
- Check all buildings and grounds for fire hazards and hazardous materials.
- Assess how any chemicals are stored and make sure children and animals can't access them.
- Make a list of chemicals for firefighters in case a fire breaks out on your farm or ranch.
- Establish a safety boundary around gas and fuel tanks.
- Don't skimp on safety: wear eye and ear protection, gloves, and face masks and respirators when appropriate.
- Shield all PTO-powered machinery and keep others away.
- Outfit tractors and trucks with fire extinguishers.
- Never exit a tractor or truck without placing it in park or engaging the emergency brakes.
- Discuss safety concerns with children and explain safe operating procedures. You can never start too young, and they watch what you do.



General safety tips source: Hobby Farms

Help Keep Your Family Safe: Don't Overload Your Home's Electrical System

With power strips and outlet converters (a multiple outlet "bar" plugged directly into an existing outlet), we can plug in multiple items in or near the same outlet.

But because we *can*, doesn't mean we *should*.

(I *can* eat a whole box of chocolates, but that doesn't mean I *should*.)

Just like chocolate consumed in excess can overload your body with too many calories, attempting to draw too much power from an outlet or circuit can overload your home's electrical system. Depending on how your home is wired, you may get away with it — or you may not. If too much current is drawn, usually a circuit breaker would trip or fuses would blow, but this is never guaranteed.

The results of overloading a circuit could range from a damaged appliance to starting a fire. That is because when too much electrical current flows through a circuit, things can overheat. Whether it is a wire, an outlet, or any other part along the electrical path, excess heat can cause serious problems.

Burt County Public Power and Safe Electricity remind you of the following electrical safety tips to help prevent overloading a circuit:

- Do not plug too many things into one outlet, extension cord, power strip, multi-outlet device or outlets on the same circuit.
- Look for loose connections or damaged or corroded wires, which can also cause an overload.
- If you continually upgrade your home with more electrical demands (lighting, appliances, electronics and so on), your home's circuits may not be able to handle the increased load.
- Plug in a space heater to a dedicated outlet (with nothing else plugged in) and do not plug a space heater into an extension cord.
- Major appliances (e.g./ refrigerator, stove, washing machine) should be plugged into their own outlet since they draw a lot of power. For smaller appliances, do not plug more than two into one outlet.
- Know how much power you draw on an outlet or circuit; some experts recommend no more than 1,500 watts per outlet or circuit.
- Consult a qualified electrician to assess your home's electrical system, especially if you have an older home.

Although we take for granted that our homes are electrically sound or that we can plug in "just one more thing," don't take chances. When in doubt, have a qualified electrician assess your home, and mention any odd symptoms you may notice, like flickering or dimming lights, warm or discolored outlets or cover plates, and frequent blow fuses or tripped circuits.

For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

I Hit a Power Pole or Other Electrical Equipment: Now What?

We all think it will never happen to us, but if can, and in an instant.

Drivers veer off the road and run into a power pole. Farmers sometimes make contact with a power line while driving tractors or other machinery. Dump or feed truck drivers raise or lower their bed and snag a power line.

People can become dangerously close to enter electricity's path. **Knowing what to do in that situation can save your life.** Incidents with power lines or other utility equipment break the electrical current's usual path. This can make the ground, vehicles and other equipment electrified.

If you hit a power pole, pad-mounted transformer ("green box") or other electrical equipment, **DO NOT** get out of the vehicle or cab. Instead, **call 9-1-1** and **wait for utility crews to come** and de-energize power. Here are some examples; in all instances, call 9-1-1:

- Your tractor or car **strikes a guy wire** (guy wires are the wires staked into the ground that stabilize utility poles). Under normal conditions, the guy wire is neutral, but if the wire is weakened, pulled out of the ground or otherwise damaged, it could become energized.
- You hit a patch of ice and go off the road **and hit a utility pole**. Or you are in a car accident and **one of the vehicles strikes a power pole**. Only get out of the car if there is smoke or fire; otherwise stay put. If there is a fire, make a clean jump or hop from your car or truck (without touching it), and hop with your feet together or shuffle keeping your feet on the ground at least 30 feet to safety. Think of the downed line sending electrical current across the ground in a ripple-like effect. Each ring of the ripple represents a different voltage. If you step from one right to another, **this is called step potential** and it can electrocute you.
- You see an accident that involves **a downed power line**. **DO NOT** approach the scene.
- You hit a **pad-mounted transformer** or other type of **electrical box**.
- Your vehicle hits a **substation**.
- You ran off the road, hit a pole and it's dark out, but **YOU DON'T KNOW** if lines are down.

Other Situations

- You get something stuck in power lines (drone or remote-control device): Do not try to retrieve it.
- You see kids climbing or sitting on pad-mounted transformers: Tell them not to sit or play on it.
- You are carrying a tall ladder or pole: Look up for power line locations and keep at least a 10-foot clearance at all times.
- You see kids climb trees that have power lines above: Warn them not to climb trees near power lines.
- You are using a portable generator: Never plug it into a wall outlet. This can cause backfeeding into the line and kill a lineworker or neighbor.

For questions about any of these scenarios, call Member Services at 888-835-1620. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Nebraska Extension News

By Aaron Nygren , Extension Educator

Be on the Lookout for Soybean Gall Midge

Have you noticed any of your small soybeans wilting and dying, especially along the edges of fields? Or have you noticed much lower yields on yield maps on the edges of your soybean fields? If so, be sure to be checking for soybean gall midge, an expanding soybean insect pest.

If soybean gall midge doesn't ring a bell, don't worry as this insect has just recently started causing damage to area soybean fields. Since being first witnessed in 2011 in northern Nebraska, soybean gall midge has now been confirmed in 29 counties covering the eastern edge of Nebraska and four other states. Symptoms of damage are dead or damaged plants on the outside edges of fields, with damage usually worse directly bordering fields that were in soybeans the previous year. Plants develop blackened, discolored stems near the base of the ground and break off very easily. This damage is caused by the larvae stage of the insect, which are quite distinctive, with a bright orange color. Considerable numbers of larvae can be found in a single plant, causing considerable damage. Larvae are laid by the adult midge, which are small flying insects only a 1/4 inch in length.

Being a newly identified insect pest, a lot is still to be learned about soybean gall midge. Over the last several years, UNL and other university researchers have been conducting research to try to gain knowledge about the pest. One important discovery is that soybean gall midge adults emerge from the soil of last year's soybean fields, which is why damage is usually worse on field borders directly next to the previous year's soybean fields.

To scout for soybean gall midge, focus your attention on field edges adjacent to last year's soybean fields, especially if you had damage last year. Starting around V4-V5, examine the lower stem of soybeans, looking for discoloration. In addition, you can bend plants to see if any snap as the plants get bigger. If a damaged plant is found, peel back the out layer of tissue and if gall midge are present you will see either white or orange larvae and more damaged tissue.

One area that researchers still don't have a good handle on is when the adults will start to emerge each year. To help research this and provide a warning to growers, researchers at UNL and surrounding states have plots on fields planted to soybeans last year to track soybean gall midge emergence using corn rootworm emergence cages. These cages trap insects that emerge out of the soil into a mason jar for analysis. If you are interested, please visit UNL's CropWatch website, found at cropwatch.unl.edu. In addition, if you would like to be notified when and where first emergence occurs, email Justin McMechan (justin.mcmechan@unl.edu) with your name, cell phone number (for texts), or email. You can also follow McMechan on Twitter at [@justinmcmechan](https://twitter.com/justinmcmechan) to stay informed about soybean gall midge reports in Nebraska.

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 management, we unfortunately do not as yet have research-based control recommendations. At this point, there are some preliminary recommendations based on midge observations. The main recommendation is that treatment is only advised for those that have soybean fields in areas where adjacent fields experienced significant economic losses last year. Applications of insecticides that provide residual activity control may be warranted to control as many emerging adults as possible. Ideally, applications could be made to just the outside portions of soybean fields since that is where the majority of damage has been found in previous years.

For more information on soybean gall midge, feel free to give me a call at 402-352-3821, email me at anygren2@unl.edu, or contact your local Nebraska Extension office.

