

BURT COUNTY

PUBLIC POWER

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It's Your Power!



Surge Protection 101

By Abby Berry, NRECA

A power surge is an unexpected increase in voltage, and it can occur from a variety of sources. Regardless of the cause, power surges can majorly damage electronic devices and equipment in your home.

Let's take a look at common causes of power surges and how you can protect your sensitive electronics.

One of the most common causes of a power surge is lightning. Most of us have experienced this during a severe thunderstorm. When lightning strikes an electrical system, the excess current must be channeled somewhere—unfortunately in many cases, it's sent through a home. Your best bet is to unplug all unused devices and electronics during severe thunderstorms.

Another common cause of power surges is electrical overload. This happens when devices or appliances are plugged into an outlet that can't handle the required amount of voltage, or if multiple devices are plugged into one outlet through an extension cord. If you're experiencing power surges due to electrical overload, it's time to call a qualified electrician to evaluate your home's circuits and electrical needs.

Faulty wiring in a home can also cause power surges. Damaged or exposed wires can cause spikes in voltage, creating a potentially dangerous situation. If you notice signs of faulty wiring, like visible burns on outlets, buzzing sounds from outlets or frequently tripped circuit breakers, your home may be due for electrical wiring repairs and updates.

Surges can also occur after a power outage. Sometimes, when electricity is being restored and reconnected, it's common to experience a quick surge in current. Similar to advice for a surge caused by lightning, it's best to unplug sensitive electronics during the outage—then wait to plug them back in after power is fully restored.

Aside from unplugging device when you suspect a power surge, there are two ways you can take additional precautions to protect electronics in your home.

Point-of-use surge protection devices, like power strips, can protect electronics during most surges. But remember, not all power strips include surge protection, so read the packaging label carefully before you buy, and don't overload the power strip with too many devices. You can also install specialized electrical outlets that offer additional surge protection. Talk to a trusted electrician to learn more.

Another option is a whole-home surge protector, which can help protect your home from larger, more powerful surges. In most cases, whole-home suppressors are connected to your home's service panel and include features like thermal fuses and notification capabilities that indicate when a device has been impacted by a surge. Whole-home surge protection prices vary based on the size of the home and suppressor. Whole-home suppressors should always be connected by a licensed electrician, so consider the cost of installation as well.

Occasional power surges are inevitable, buy by unplugging devices when you think a surge may occur and using additional levels of protection like power strips or whole-home suppressors, you can better safeguard your sensitive electronics and devices.

Burt's Briefs

Irrigation Changes. All irrigation meters have been changed to the new RF read meters, along with the new load control switches. Changes will allow us to read the meters better and change load control groups for irrigators from our office. We can tell if the irrigation system is being controlled and can shut them off from the office is needed.

Nebraska Youth Energy Leadership Camp. Burt County PPD will again sponsor two or three students to attend a week long youth energy leadership camp at Halsey State Park. The camp is usually held the third week of July, starting on a Monday and ending on a Friday. To be eligible to attend this year's camp a student must be in the 9th, 10th or 11th grade and live in a home served by Burt County PPD. If interested, please contact our office for an entry form and more details.

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.

Remote Service Disconnects and Meter Data. All meters can be disconnected from our office, hoping to cut down on trips to customers' services and overtime. By having automatic meter reading, we can integrate your meter for outages, blinks, peak kw, voltage, and kilowatt usage. Call our office for more details.

Changing Address. If you are on the move be sure to let our office know! Simply call us or drop us a note! You will be responsible for the power bill until we are notified.

Reap What You Sow: Stay Safe During Planting Season

Long hours and fatigue are a constant battle for farmers during planting season. If you farm, remember to take care of yourself by getting as much rest as possible and allowing yourself breaks to clear your head.

Be especially aware of electrical hazards around the farm. Be cautious and think twice before acting around electricity. **Safe Electricity** offers farmers the following reminders:

- If your machinery or vehicle comes in contact with a power line, do not get out. Once contact has been made with a live line (even when your tractor or truck makes contact), you are now a “pathway to ground” and you could get electrocuted if you step out. Instead, stay where you are and call 9-1-1 to dispatch the appropriate utility to de-energize the power.
- If you come across an accident or incident near a downed power line, alert individuals (from a distance) to stay in the tractor or vehicle as long as there is no imminent danger. Do not approach the scene.
- When using machinery with long extensions or tall antennas and when using ladders, look up to avoid contact with overhead power lines.
- Even if there is no contact, an electrical current can jump or arc so keep equipment at least 10 feet from surrounding power lines at all times.
- Remember, non-metallic materials (such as tree limbs, ropes, and hay) can conduct electricity, depending on dampness and dust/dirt accumulation.
- Visually inspect overhead lines, which may not meet height codes due to age or pole damage. If a wire is hanging low or is on the ground, consider it energized and stay at least 50 feet away; call 9-1-1 to have the operator dispatch the utility.
- Every day, map out where equipment will be moved to ensure it will clear power lines.
- When working in the vicinity of power lines, always use a spotter who has a broad vantage point.
- Train anyone working with you or for you (including seasonal employees) to be aware of power line locations and teach them proper clearance distance. Also design and implement a safety training program that includes a review of electrical hazards and how to safely deal with power lines.
- According to American Family Insurance, “know your PTO.” To stay safe when working with a power take off (PTO), always disengage the PTO, turn off the engine and remove keys before getting off the tractor. Also, never step across a rotating power shaft.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Any Irrigation Load Control changes need to be made by April 1st. Changes after April 1st can only be made from moving from a higher control hour group to a lower control hour group, with added fees applied. Example: I-22 (Full Control) to I-9 (No Control).



TRANSPORT SAFELY

Ensure equipment is compliant with agriculture road and travel safety rules



SHARE SAFETY TIPS

Teach anyone working or doing business on your farm about electrical hazards



ENCOURAGE YOUNG WORKERS

Be sure to match age and ability level with each chore



BE CLEAR

Explain where the “back 80” or Smith field is; not everyone may know how to get there



WRITE IT DOWN

Keep directions (with proper road and farm ground names) at home, in the shop and in cabs



LOOK AROUND

Inspect your space and look for hazards before you start planting



EVALUATE PROCEDURES

Consider new safety precautions you can implement, such as lockout/tagout



MEET AND DISCUSS

Conduct morning safety meetings to brief everyone on the day and talk about potential hazards

Sources: Rural Mutual Insurance Co., farmprogress.com



Be Prepared and Stay Safe: Storm Watches Vs. Warnings

At any moment, 1,800 thunderstorms could occur worldwide, according to the National Weather Service. That is 16 million storms a year! In an average year, 1,200 tornadoes cause 60 to 65 fatalities and 1,500 injuries in the U.S. alone.

To protect yourself, your family and your property from seasonal thunderstorms and tornadoes, you need more than a flashlight and a few cans of food (although they are essential parts of your emergency kit). Beyond the items in your preparedness kit, it is a good idea to fully understand how dangerous storms can be and how to interpret weather alerts to minimize risk.

Watch versus warning

When bad weather is approaching, people typically turn on the TV, pull up a weather app or look online for information. If you see a severe weather watch or warning, something bad could be heading your way. However, many people do not consider the differences between the two.

A *watch* means there is a significant chance of a severe thunderstorm or tornado. *Watch* and wait for more information while taking precautionary measures, like unplugging electronics and checking the contents of your emergency preparedness kit.

A *warning* means that a severe thunderstorm or tornado has been spotted or seen on radar. The moment you get a warning, take shelter in the safest part of your home, which is usually in your basement or the interior part of your home.

Thunderstorms

Thunderstorms are some of the most common yet destructive weather events on Earth. Most of the damage comes from flooding caused by heavy rains, lightning strikes and high winds. Some storms also deliver hail and can even spawn tornadoes. Bad weather systems, such as those that cause thunderstorms, can cause broken windows, extreme water damage, fallen trees, serious fires, downed power lines and more.

Do not ignore the potential hazards of thunderstorms. Keep flashlights or battery-operated lights well supplied with batteries or charge them regularly. Keep a supply of nonperishable food and drinking water on hand. Turn off and unplug electronic equipment to protect it from power surges. Move valuables out of the basement or other locations that may flood. If a power outage occurs, never use a portable generator in your home, enclosed structure or garage. Do not step into a flooded basement or area since the water could be electrified.

Tornadoes

The central part of the United States is sometimes referred to as Tornado Alley because it is the most common geographic location for these disastrous storms. The Great Plains have the perfect environment and climate for severe storm creation. While tornadoes can happen in any month, they are much likelier in the spring and summer than in other seasons. April, May and June have more than twice as many reported tornadoes as any other time of the year.

To stay safe during a tornado, be aware of weather conditions during thunderstorms that could breed tornadoes. Know the best place to shelter both indoors and out, and always protect your head, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Understanding severe thunderstorm and tornado watches and warnings can help keep you and your family safe. Do not underestimate the potential power of these weather systems. Take steps to protect yourselves and your property before a storm hits.

For more information about storm preparedness and electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

WATCH

A watch means there is a **great chance of a severe thunderstorm or tornado.**

“Watch” and wait for more information while taking precautionary measures.

WARNING

A warning means that a **severe thunderstorm or tornado has been spotted or seen** on radar.

The moment you get a warning, **take shelter in the safest part of your home.**

SafeElectricity.org®

UNL Extension News

By Kathleen Cue , Extension Educator

Perennials for Specific Sites

When it is time to plant perennials in the landscape, there are a small handful that fit in a wide range of site conditions. With this limited plant palette, however, the offering becomes boring and limits the number of pollinators visiting the yard. Traits we are not looking for in our perennials are things that add to our workload—plants that are thugs, growing into and over their neighbor, plants that flop over, necessitating the need for stakes and wire, and plants that require constant monitoring and treatment for insect and disease problems. What, then, are the possibilities for enhancing landscapes in challenging conditions?

Hot, Dry Sites

Inferno strips, the area between sidewalk and street, can sometimes be the hottest and driest part of the yard because of the proximity to heat-retaining concrete. Likewise, west-facing walls, especially if the roof eaves prevent rainfall from reaching the soil and/or the wall itself is made of brick, are hot and dry sites. Perennials worth trying here are licorice mint (*Agastache* spp.), ornamental onion (*Allium* spp.), black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia* spp.), sedum (*Hylotelephium* spp.), patrinia (*Patrinia scabiosifolia*), frostgrass (*Spodiopogon sibirica*), false indigo (*Baptisia australis*), giant Sacaton grass (*Sporobolus wrightii*), comfrey (*Symphytum grandiflora*), and Siberian catmint (*Nepeta 'Souvenir d'Andre Chaudron'*).

Dappled Sunlight, Part Sun/Part Shade

Plants that thrive in dappled sunlight have evolved a photosynthetic system that jumps into high gear as sunlight dances across leaves, only to slow their metabolic rate when in shade—awesome indeed! Sites in this category can be found at the edge of the tree canopy and where buildings shade the area through half the day. Perennials that grow well in these conditions are beautyberry (*Callicarpa dichotoma*), blue star Kalimeris, Korean feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis brachytricha*), mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*), Japanese anemone (*Anemone hupehensis*), and hakone grass (*Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola'*).

Shade

Hosta has been the go-to plant for shady conditions, but options are broadened, and the site lines enhanced when incorporating things like bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), pigsqueak (*Bergenia cordifolia*), Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*), celandine poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*), straw foxglove (*Digitalis lutea*), lungwort (*Pulmonaria* spp.), and sweet woodruff (*Gallium odoratum*).

Wet Areas and Pond Edges

Some perennials do best when grown in soils that stay consistently wet. Low-lying, boggy areas and those next to a pond are prime examples. Sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*), umbrella leaf plant (*Darmera peltate*), cutleaf ligularia (*Ligularia japonica*), spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginiana*), and turtlehead (*Chelone* spp.) are excellent options.

The Rain Garden

Rain gardens are shallow depressions that intentionally detain water routed from rooftops and other impervious surfaces, allowing water to percolate through the soil instead of contributing to runoff. While it's tempting to choose plants that prefer wet areas, when it comes to creating a rain garden, native plants are the best choice because they are highly adapted to periods of wet and periods of dry. The mechanism for this resiliency is their root system, which extends downward 10 feet and deeper, serving as a conduit for downward movement of water. To keep the rain garden from looking like a weed patch, choose native plants that are more refined: white coneflower (*Echinacea alba*), Ozark coneflower (*Echinacea paradoxa*), prairie

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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.

dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*), sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula 'Blonde Ambition'*), letterman's ironweed (*Vernonia lettermanii*), and Bridge's penstemon (*Penstemon rostriflorus*).

The Pollinator Garden

Attracting pollinators so they live and thrive is the focus of a pollinator garden. That the garden looks pretty doesn't hurt either. Dwarf mouse ear coreopsis (*Coreopsis auriculata 'Nana'*), snow daisy (*Tanacetum niveum*), bee balm (*Monarda* spp.), asters (*Symphotrichum 'Dream of Beauty'* and *'October Skies'*), and chaste tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*) are pollinator magnets and otherwise little-known additions. Be sure to confine cutting back stems of perennials to the spring, to protect cavity nesting bees. Leave stems 8-10 in length to allow time for insect emergence from their overwintering site. New foliage will cover up these stems, masking their unruly appearance.

Stands Up to Dog Urine

If your garden is the relief spot for Fido, finding plants that will do well under high nitrogen and acidic conditions is a challenge. Plants with thick leaves and/or hairy leaf surfaces weather these conditions better. Consider ornamental oregano (*Origanum* spp.), roses, ornamental grasses, and lamb's ear (*Stachys* spp.) While vegetable plants can withstand dog urine, these plants should not be eaten by humans because of the potential for disease spread.

The Rock Garden

Many of the plants suitable for rock gardens thrive in well-draining rocky soils. Most plants that grow in these conditions are classified as groundcovers, hugging the ground to minimize water loss from drying winds. Species tulips (such as *Tulipa batalinii*), creeping thyme (*Thymus* spp.), *Iris cristata*, and Siberian squill (*Scilla sibirica*) are great choices. Daylilies, too, are classified as a groundcover and with the tremendous number of color variations and flower shapes, offer a welcome addition to rock gardens.

No matter the challenge a site poses, choosing perennials needn't be a challenge too. Remember to trial plants, matching the growing conditions to the plant's preferences.