

**BURT COUNTY**

# PUBLIC POWER

PO Box 209  
Tekamah, NE 68061

*It's Your Power!*



## A “Controlled” Burn Can Quickly Turn Chaotic

A “controlled burn” can quickly become an uncontrolled one, so take precautions before burning on your land or in a ditch. Controlled burns are used for various reasons, including vegetation and weed management.

If the area you choose to burn is near a utility pole or if it spreads more quickly and farther than you thought it might, your controlled burn could get expensive.

Fire damage to a power pole is usually evident by blackening and scorch marks, but even slight discoloration can cause serious problems. In some cases, the pole can look like it has little damage on the outside, all the while burning from the inside out.

In all cases the result is the same: the utility pole is compromised and will most likely need to be replaced, compliments of the person who started the burn. The fees passed on to the person who caused it are substantial—usually in the thousands of dollars.

The damage could also cause a power outage or other serious service issues including energized lines falling near or on the ground, creating a potentially deadly situation.

So what can you do to prevent burn-related damage to a power pole?

- Plan your burn before you begin.
- Check the forecast for weather conditions, such as wind direction and speed, as well as humidity (as a general rule, relative humidity should be 40 percent or higher).
- If there are power poles in the planned burning area, clear all vegetation and weeds at least four feet around the base of the pole.
- Wet the base of the pole with water before beginning your burn.

If your fire gets out of control, gets too close to a power pole, or if the pole catches on fire, call 9-1-1 and Burt County Public Power District at 888-835-1620. Once a fire breaks out, NEVER spray water near the pole, power lines, or any other utility equipment. Electricity and water do not mix and you could cause a short circuit that could cause serious injury or death.

## *Burt's Briefs*

**Labor Day Holiday.** Our office will be closed Monday, September 2nd in recognition of Labor Day.

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

**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. We recommend that you change filters once a month in heavy heating and cooling seasons. This helps air flow through your system better giving you better efficiency, not to mention your house doesn't get so dusty.

**Remember You Can Pay Online.** Customers have several ways they can pay their electric bill. Two of the more popular ways are by clicking on our website, [www.burtcoppd.com](http://www.burtcoppd.com) and paying online or having a debit or credit card on file connect to automatic withdrawal for your electric bill. And now with our new PCS Mobile app you can view and pay your bills right from the palm of your hand.



## What Causes a Transformer to Catch Fire?

Before we talk about what can cause a transformer to catch fire, let's take a step back and consider the transformer itself.

Last time you drove by a substation, you may have wondered what all is in there. Or, if you have an inquisitive 4-year-old, he or she probably asked all about it on the way to preschool.

Parts of all that metal equipment behind the substation fence includes transformers. In your neighborhood or on your street, the transformer is either located in a barrel-type housing high up on a power pole or in the green utility boxes every fifth yard or so.

In all cases, the transformer is used to “step down” or decrease voltage from high powered to lower powered lines.

Transformers can malfunction and let the world know it with a bang. They can explode and catch on fire for two major reasons: from a lightning strike or from damaged wires or equipment somewhere else on the electrical pathway.

Although transformers have built-in protective devices, they may not trigger fast enough to prevent an explosion. (Protective circuits are fast—they respond almost immediately—but they are not as fast as lightning.)

The result, especially for the large substation transformers, is often a bluish-green flash that can be seen from far away at night. The event can also interrupt electrical service to any homes or businesses fed by the transformer.

After a transformer catches on fire:

- Stay away!
- Please be patient until we can restore service. Our crews must shut down the incoming line first and then repair the destroyed hardware.
- If a transformer near your home catches on fire, DO NOT try to put out the fire yourself (water and electricity don't mix). Call 9-1-1 to report the fire.
- Power not directly impacted by the transformer fire may need to be shut off temporarily during repairs to prevent stress on the electrical system.

For more information about power line or transformer safety, contact us at 888-835-1620.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

**35,100**   
**reported home fires\***  
**per year involve electrical**  
**or lighting issues. Use AFCIs**  
**to help protect your home.**

*\*On average, per year, home structure fires between 2012 and 2016; Source: NFPA*

**Safe**  
**Electricity.org**



# Babyproofing Your Home?

## Don't Forget Electrical Dangers

Parents preparing for the arrival of a little one have lots to think about when it comes to babyproofing their home. There are the usual tasks to check off the babyproofing list, such as putting poisons and medications out of reach, securing tall furniture that could topple, and installing cabinet and toilet locks.

Burt County Public Power District and Safe Electricity remind you that along with usual babyproofing tasks, your to-do list should also include electrical dangers.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, approximately 2,400 children suffer from shock and burns each year caused by items being inserted into the slots of electrical receptacles. Even more alarming is that on average, 12 children die from these injuries every year.

Although many of today's newer or remodeled homes have AFCI (arc fault circuit interrupter) and GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) technology to help prevent electrical fires and shocks, parents cannot rely on that solely to protect their little ones. They aren't always a match for a toddler's schemes and they also need to be tested regularly to make sure they are in working order.

### Tamper-free outlets

Most grandparents did not have these as an option when they were bringing home baby, but the National Electrical Code requires tamper-free outlets in homes built in 2008 or after.

Tamper-free outlets feature slots that appear to be filled with plastic. The plastic serves as a type of spring-loaded shutter that only opens when pushed at the same time (like when plugging something in).

### Other outlet-related options include:

- Outlet plate covers that have slides on them that must be moved slightly before plugging something in;
- Outlet plugs; and
- Outlet caps (like a plug but easier to remove)

Plugs and caps are great, but remember babies grow into toddlers who can crack the code (remove them) and they are completely ineffective if adults forget to replace them after short-term tasks like vacuuming.

Also be careful when using extension cords around crawling babies and toddlers. Put them away as soon as you are done with them. And check for long electrical cords that span the floor and secure them with cord covers to avoid trip/crawl hazards.

### Other helpful items to consider using:

- Power strip covers (or hide strips behind furniture and out of baby's sight).
- Cord shortening devices so cords do not have excess length or droop.
- Anti-unplug device (a box-like outlet cover with one open side) so baby can't unplug devices.
- Masking tape when traveling—use it to cover unused outlets or tape down cords.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).



Install a programmable thermostat and set temperatures based on your daily routines. This simple switch could lower your energy bill by up to 33 percent.

**Burt County Public Power District**  
PO Box 209  
Tekamah, NE 68061  
402-374-2631 or 1-888-835-1620

In partnership with our supplier, Nebraska Public Power District, we deliver energy to you.

# Nebraska Extension News

By John Wilson , Extension Educator

## Prepare Bins and Equipment Before Harvest

Harvest may be later than usual this year with delayed planting last spring. This gives you a little extra time to prepare your grain bins, combines, and handling equipment to store the new crop. Grain harvested is essentially insect-free, but it can become infested. Here are some tips on how to prepare bins and equipment to eliminate or reduce stored grain insect problems.

First, be sure to store clean, dry grain. It is advisable to screen out broken grain, chaff, and other debris to increase the quality of the final storage product. Since stored-grain insects can move from infested harvesting and handling equipment (combines, augers, etc.) to newly harvested grain, cleanup is essential.

Carefully remove all traces of old grain from combines, truck beds, grain carts, augers and any other equipment used for harvesting, transporting and handling grain. Even small amounts of moldy or insect-infested grain left in equipment can contaminate a bin of new grain.

Then clean grain bins thoroughly, disposing of spilled, cracked and broken grain and grain flour, along with the insects feeding on such material. A simple broom and a vacuum cleaner are essential pieces of equipment to clean grain bins. Never store new grain on top of old grain in a bin.

How clean is clean enough? Is a question many producers ask. A good rule of thumb to follow when cleaning bins and equipment is: If you can tell what was stored or handled last season by looking in the auger, bin or combine, it is NOT clean enough to prevent re-contamination of the new crop.

### Tips for Grain Bin Preparation

Around the bins, be sure to remove old equipment, junk, and clutter to reduce attractiveness to insects and rodents. Make sure the bin is insect and rodent-proofed by plugging holes, sealing bins, caulking, and making general repairs.

Grain spilled near the bin attracts insects and draws mice and rats. Clean up and dispose of any spilled grain several weeks prior to harvest. If rats have tunneled under foundations, use poison baits or traps to reduce or eliminate them.

Tall weeds can harbor insects and provide cover for rodents. Mow around the bin site to remove tall grass and weeds to reduce the potential for insect and rodent infestation.

If necessary, re-grade the site so water readily drains away from bin foundations. You cannot always wait for the soil to dry before loading or unloading grain from bin sites. Landscaping should be maintained so water runs away from grain storage facilities. Leave a four-foot-wide strip of bare gravel around the perimeter of storage bins. Make certain travel lanes have enough rock or gravel to bear the weight of heavy trucks and grain carts. If purchasing old crop grain to feed and storing it with newly harvested grain, be sure to watch for insects in the incoming grain. If infested grain is purchased for livestock feed, store it away from the new crop, and feed it as soon as possible. Grain stocks may be rotated, or moved and a grain protectant applied at the time of turning.

Electrical system maintenance before harvest can prevent costly downtime. Wiring for fans and other electrical components should be inspected for corrosion and cracked, frayed or broken insulation. Exposed wiring should be run through waterproof,

## Burt County Public Power District News

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

### Board of Directors

Gerald Bohling	President
Michael J. Chatt	Vice President
Michael R. Williams	Treasurer
Greg Johnson	Secretary
Dwane Piere	Director
Scott Lindstrom	Director
Jonathon 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.

dust-tight conduit. Avoid kinking the conduit, and make sure all connections are secure.

Mice often nest in control boxes where they are protected from predators. They can strip insulation from wires for nest material and their urine sometimes causes corrosion on relays and other electrical components. If rodent damage is found, clean and repair or replace damaged wiring, relays and other electrical equipment. Then seal over knock-outs and other openings that may permit rodent entry.

Fans, heaters, transitions and ducts should be checked for corrosion and other damage. Remove any accumulated dust and dirt that may reduce operating efficiency and be sure all connections are tight to prevent air leaks that can reduce operating efficiency.

### Residual Chemical Treatments

Once empty bins have been thoroughly cleaned, a residual treatment may be applied to bin surfaces to protect incoming grain from insect infestation. Read and follow the label instructions carefully. Be sure to observe which crop(s) a chemical can be used on, the interval between bin treatment and when grain can be stored in the bin, and how long before grain from a treated bin can be fed or sold.

For bins with aeration floors, spraying the bin and the floor is recommended. The inside walls and floors should be treated with a residual insecticide after thorough cleaning. The outside walls (up to 15 feet) and outside base of grain storage bins may also be treated. The area beneath the perforated drying floor should also be cleaned and treated with a residual insecticide.

For more information visit <https://cropwatch.unl.edu/grain-storage-management> or your local extension office.