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## FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

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- Power Up Your Lawn Care with Electric Equipment •
- Empowering Lineworkers •
- Anatomy of a Power Outage



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*Ethan Ideus of Beatrice holds one of his favorite chickens in front of his roadside egg stand business. See the related article on page 6. Photograph by Susan Barnard*



Wayne Price

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## Unlocking the Future: The Powerful Potential of Beneficial Electrification

In today's dynamic energy landscape, the concept of beneficial electrification emerges as a potent strategy for achieving sustainability and efficiency goals. But what exactly does it entail? Beneficial electrification involves the strategic use of electricity across various applications, aiming to reduce emissions, enhance energy efficiency, and promote environmental stewardship.

Let's explore its application across different sectors:

**Transportation:** Beneficial electrification shines brightly in transportation, notably through the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs). By transitioning to EVs, we can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality. With lower operating costs and reduced dependence on fossil fuels, EVs pave the way for a cleaner and more sustainable future in transportation.

**Buildings:** Beneficial electrification plays a crucial role in buildings by switching to electric heating, cooling, and appliances. This transition greatly reduces the carbon footprint while improving energy efficiency and indoor air quality. Heat pumps, in particular, are highly efficient and versatile, contributing to energy savings and environmental sustainability.

**Industry:** In the industrial sector, beneficial electrification offers opportunities to optimize energy usage and reduce emissions. By replacing fossil fuel-powered equipment with electric alternatives, industries improve operational efficiency and comply with regulatory requirements. Electrified processes provide greater flexibility and control over energy consumption, leading to significant cost savings and environmental benefits.

**Challenges and Opportunities:** While beneficial electrification holds immense promise, it faces challenges such as infrastructure limitations and technological barriers. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and collaboration. Advancements in renewable energy technologies and smart grid solutions enable the integration of large-scale electrification projects, unlocking economic and environmental benefits for communities worldwide.

Beneficial electrification represents a transformative approach to sustainable energy management, offering a pathway towards decarbonization and economic prosperity. By leveraging electricity as a reliable energy source across diverse sectors, we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve quality of life for present and future generations. As we navigate the challenges of climate change, beneficial electrification stands as an innovative step forward in the quest for a brighter, greener future.



Dennis Herman

Dennis Herman is the General Manager of Highline Electric Association, headquartered in Holyoke, Colorado

## How Your Elected Board Shapes Your Public Power Provider's Future

One of, and perhaps the most important, thing that makes public power unique compared to investor-owned utilities is our governance model. Public power organizations are governed by a locally elected board of directors. Given that the control of your power provider is in the hands of the directors that you elect, you may wonder what the job entails.

In this article, I outline the key responsibilities of the Board, as well as the supportive functions they contribute to the successful operation of your power provider.

At the core of the Board's responsibilities lie its duties in maintaining legal integrity, acting as trustees of member interests, engaging in strategic planning, providing oversight over company operations, and establishing measures for performance evaluation.

**Legal Integrity:** One of the primary duties of the Board is to ensure compliance with all legal requirements outlined in the organization's Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, and relevant regulations. This includes adherence to federal, state, and local statutes, as well as regulations from regulatory bodies such as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Federal Communications Commission. Additionally, the Board oversees the execution of legal contracts, approves membership applications, and ensures all contractual obligations are met.

**Trusteeship of Member Interests:** As stewards of the organization's assets, the Board is responsible for safeguarding and managing these assets in the best interest of the members. This includes adherence to the organization's By-Laws and policies, as well as implementing programs for member and public relations. For cooperatives, the Board also allocates Capital Credits to patrons annually and determines the timing and amount of patronage refunds.

**Strategic Planning:** Effective strategic planning is essential for guiding the organization towards its goals and objectives. The Board is tasked with developing ideals, objectives, and major goals in consultation with management and members. This involves establishing financial plans and policies, as well as policies for member relations, public relations, and consumer education. The Board may also plan annual, district, and special membership meetings to engage with members and solicit their input.

**Operational Requirements:** The Board provides oversight and authorization for operational activities, including the approval of funds for necessary facilities and equipment. This includes the selection and

**Continued on Page 17**

# From Tragedy to Triumph

## Inside the Heartwarming Story of Ethan's Farm Fresh Eggs

When 11-year-old Ethan Ideus isn't attending school at Freeman in Adams, he's at home just west of Beatrice taking care of his chickens for his new business, Ethan's Farm Fresh Eggs.

Ethan, with the help from his aunt Becky Dorn and Brad Christ, created the self-service roadside egg stand in 2023. Ethan joined Becky and Brad's home after the tragic loss of his parents, the late Glenn and Tracy Hoffman-Ideus (Becky's sister) in 2021. There have been lots of changes and challenges for this family, but the egg business has been a fun and educational journey for them.

The roadside stand, built by Brad, is set up at the end of the family's driveway. If the green flag is up, eggs are available for purchase in a red cooler for \$3 a dozen. If the red flag is flying, the stand is out of eggs for that day. A metal cash box sits in the stand where customers can deposit money, or they can send a Venmo payment to Becky. Earlier this year, Ethan's stand suffered a blow when someone destroyed the money box and took the cash. But that didn't deter him. Lee Waldo of DeWitt and Schuerman Welding of Clatonia, donated labor and supplies for a new heavy-duty secure cash box. Security cameras at the stand were also installed.

Neighbors and the community have been very supportive of Ethan's egg business, and it's been a great way for them to meet new people. When locals heard of his egg money being stolen, several people showed up with donations out of pure kindness. If he has a good egg week, he puts extra money in the collection plate at church. He recently purchased a red windmill for the chicken area and is saving up to purchase a bigger refrigerator for the egg business.

Although Ethan has been enjoying the business venture, he said cleaning the chicken coop is the one



thing he doesn't like to do – but Becky helps. He likes to clean the eggs and is very organized, making sure the refrigerators are stocked and eggs are ready to go for customers. The family built the chicken coop themselves, featuring temperature controls and automatic feeders as well as an automatic door that shuts at night when the flock has come into roost.

"We had to obtain a license to sell our eggs," said Becky. The internet has been their friend, as they research and learn all kinds of things about raising chickens.

Ethan started with 12 chickens, he's up to 15 laying hens now and hasn't lost a one. Chickens are social creatures. They play and explore together, satisfying their curiosity and need for companionship. They also establish a pecking order, the hierarchy of dominance within a flock, establishing order in chicken society and



allowing everyone to coexist peacefully.

Chickens have very good memories. Ethan explained that every night towards dusk the chickens instinctively know when it's time to head to the coop. He double checks them and does a quick head count just in case. Chickens can also recognize up to 100 different human faces and are quite talkative. While holding one of his favorite chickens of the flock, you could hear the chicken “purr” just like a cat. When a chicken is happy, cozy, and safe, they will close their eyes and purr softly.

Ethan's chickens are well cared for and the business, along with Becky and Brad's guidance, has taught Ethan about responsibility, hard work, animal care, and most importantly where good food comes from. Having a protein rich food source right in your backyard is a bonus too, and Ethan said he enjoys Aunt Becky's deviled eggs the best.

*Left: White Leghorns are considered the best white egg laying chicken breed. They are the most common variety, laying large white eggs almost every day, averaging 280-320 eggs per year.*

*Above: Ethan's chickens enjoy a treat after he collected a dozen eggs from the coop. His family are customers of Norris Public Power District.*

# Empowering Lineworkers

## Inside the Innovative Quad State Instructors Safety & Leadership Conference

In late April, a significant event unfolded in Omaha, Nebraska, as approximately 67 lineworkers from across the nation gathered for the Lineworker, Safety, Training & Leadership Conference. This conference marked a departure from traditional gatherings, distinguished by its innovative approach.

The Quad State Instructors Safety, Training & Leadership Conference concept came about in 2022. The core function of QSI has always been to promote collaboration between those that provide education and training to lineworkers. This collaboration is the foundation of the group. The idea of hosting a national safety conference targeting up-and-coming lineworkers, not supervisors, is new. Apprentices and supervisors have many opportunities to attend training. However, there seems to be

a lull for lineworkers who are five to 20 years into their career. QSI members saw this as an opportunity.

“This conference focuses on the lineworker, who has shown promises of becoming a leader in the future,” said Larry Oetken, Nebraska Rural Electric Association JT&S Coordinator. “The QSI organization saw a need for this group of upcoming leaders, within the PPD/Cooperative family in the summer of 2022 and the inaugural event was held in Omaha in April of 2023.”

The target attendees are the people who actively influence the safety culture at their utility. They are sought out by an apprentice if they have a question. These people take the time not only to show but to explain why specific tasks are done a certain way. The goal of this conference is not only to educate

but to provide a place and means for people to collaborate, share, and engage with each other.

“The linemen at this workshop are chosen specifically for their leadership qualities that they are showing at their cooperative, which is the guidance towards apprentice linemen, teaching them, answering their questions and helping them along,” said Matt Pociask, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives Director of Safety.

One distinguishing feature of this conference is its accessibility. There are no conference fees; attendees only incur travel and lodging expenses. Attendance is by recommendation only—individuals cannot simply purchase their way in. This selection process ensures that the right individuals are present, maintaining the integrity and focus of the conference.

“There is only one employee from a PPD/Cooperative,” Oetken said. “This encourages all attendees to network with other lineworkers from across the country. The conference is kept small on purpose to have that welcoming feeling to each individual attending, and they aren’t just another person at a conference.”

The Lineworker, Safety, Training & Leadership Conference embodies a progressive approach to professional development. Through its emphasis on collaboration and shared expertise, it equips attendees with the tools and insights necessary to effect positive change within the lineworker industry.

“When you’re an apprentice, you are engaged with your apprenticeship program until you become a journeyman,” said Oetken. “Once a journeyman,



there's limited training/leadership development offered until you enter the realm of supervision such as foreman, line superintendent, or operations. This conference offers some attendees their first opportunity to network with other lineworkers around the country."

Oetken noted this networking is vital to leadership development as they continue to advance themselves within this industry.

Quad State Instructors serves as a beacon of excellence in safety education and collaboration within the electric utility sector. Through its unwavering dedication to promoting best practices and fostering continuous learning, QSI remains at the forefront of advancing safety standards and enhancing community well-being across the nation.

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## Larry's Safety Lesson

### When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors

By **Larry Oetken**



While lightning is most common in the summer, it can strike year round. According to the National Weather Service, on average, 55 people are killed each year and hundreds of others are injured by lightning in the United States.

It is extremely important to take lightning seriously and to stay educated on lightning safety.

Make sure children also understand the importance of lightning awareness and how to stay safe. Don't be fooled by blue skies. If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to pose an immediate threat. That is why the National Weather Service has adopted the saying: Lightning can strike up to 10 miles from the area in which it is raining, even if you don't see clouds. This means that if you can hear thunder, you're within striking distance. When the storm is over, wait 30 minutes after

the last lightning strike you see before going back outside.

If caught outdoors during a thunderstorm and unable to take shelter in a building, take the following precautions:

- Try to take shelter in a vehicle with a solid metal roof. Close the windows and avoid contact with electrical conducting paths, such as the steering wheel, ignition, gear shifter, or radio.
- Avoid water, high ground, or open spaces.
- Do not seek shelter under tall, solitary trees; canopies; small picnic or rain shelters; or in any open-frame vehicles such as jeeps, convertibles, golf carts, tractors or mowers.
- Do not stand near power, light or flag poles, machinery, fences, gates, metal bleachers, or even other people. If you are in a group, spread out so that you are at least twenty feet apart.

Larry Oetken is the Job Training & Safety Coordinator for the Nebraska Rural Electric Association.



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# Anatomy of a Power Outage

Fifteen minutes from now, a stray bolt of lightning will connect a menacing cloud with a power pole about a mile east of your home. Your lights will flicker briefly before going out. Things will become eerily quiet as all your home's devices equipped with motors and fans stop providing their constant symphony of background noise.

You're experiencing a power outage, so you reach for your phone and call your rural electric utility. Good move. Sometimes, members don't call because they assume their neighbors will. However, the more members who do make the call, the more quickly the utility will be able to pinpoint the outage location.

Back at the office, the utility's grid system operator noticed the sudden pause at the moment 300 million volts of lightning danced around a transformer, and they're able to triangulate the location of the outage. The system estimates just over 500 members are in the dark as a line crew tosses their dinner aside and steer their trucks in that direction.

Thirty minutes later, the lineworkers slowly drive along a stretch of road, keeping one eye on traffic while inspecting every pole, wire and transformer. In another eight minutes, they stop and step out for a closer look. The mystery is solved with one glance at the burn mark across the surface of the transformer. Relying on the truck and ensuring it's safe, they move closer to the line.

If you watch the lineworkers, you might mistakenly assume they're not very motivated. After all, you're dealing with a power outage, you want it to end as soon as humanly possible, and it looks like they're simply taking their sweet time while you're missing the ballgame. But there's a good reason the lineworkers aren't rushing or running around.

Those power lines carry high-voltage electricity. It's safe when all elements of the system are in good working order, but it's potentially deadly when that's not the case. Lineworkers approach what they do deliberately, efficiently—and most of all, safely. Every action they take is carefully planned so they can spot potential



hazards. When performing tasks, they follow standard procedures and safety requirements to ensure the repair is effective and sound. Working that way may take a little extra time, but it means they'll make it home safely at the end of the day (or night).

Less than an hour after finding the cause of the outage, the lineworkers load their tools and gear back onto the trucks. This time, the problem was easy to spot, the repair was fairly straightforward and the weather cooperated. But no two outages are exactly alike. The next one could be in severe weather or on a remote



thanks to the lineworkers, life is back to normal.

Lightning streaks across the world's skies roughly eight million times every day, and power poles, lines and other infrastructure provide attractive targets for helping it connect it with the ground. But outages can occur from a variety of causes, including fallen trees, vehicle crashes and even curious critters, like snakes and squirrels.

This is why your rural electric utility invests in the right technologies and equipment designed to protect the power grid and prevent outages from plunging your home into darkness. And it's also why the lineworkers, who put themselves at risk to return your life to normal, are some of our favorite people.



*Center: While restoring power outages, lineworkers must follow standard procedures and safety requirements to ensure the repairs are effective and sound.*

*Above: Outages can occur from a variety of causes, including fallen trees, vehicle crashes and even curious critters, like snakes and squirrels. Photographs by John Huneycutt, Union Power Cooperative*

segment far off the main road. It could involve a fallen tree that needs to be cut with chainsaws or broken utility pole that needs to be replaced. Doesn't matter, because lineworkers will always get to the location and fix the problem as quickly as safety allows.

Driving back to the utility, the lineworkers watch the passing homes and smiles, because the warm glow coming from the windows means the power's back on again. A couple members in their yard wave as the trucks pass by. They may not know why the electricity went off and what was involved in bringing it back, but

By Anne Prince

# Power Up Your Lawn Care with Electric Equipment



The landscape of lawn and garden care is evolving, and electric equipment is at the forefront of this change. While electric lawn tools aren't new, advancements in technology and more options mean prices have become more competitive, making electric equipment an accessible option for many consumers.

## Benefits of Electric Equipment

Electric lawnmowers have come a long way since the days of extension cords tethering you to an outlet. Battery-powered mowers offer the same freedom of movement as gas-powered models but with reduced noise and maintenance.

Battery life was once a major drawback to making the switch to electric lawn tools. But today's growing demand for electric equipment has resulted in major advancements for lithium-ion batteries, making them more reliable, cost-effective and efficient. For most consumers, electric lawn tools can get the job done just as well as gas-powered models.

Many electric mowers offer push-button starts, and because they are lighter, they are easier to maneuver around tight turns. Improved batteries provide longer run times to tackle larger spaces. Like their gas-powered counterparts, electric mowers are available in push, self-propelled/walk-behind and riding models. And there's no need to refill gas cans or change oil and air filters, resulting in less hassle and maintenance.

Like mowers, electric blowers, string trimmers and chainsaws have fewer moving parts, require minimal maintenance and are quieter. Because electric tools are generally lighter in weight, they're also more ergonomic and easier to maneuver. This feature is especially handy for projects that require tools like chainsaws for precise work.

## Choose Electric Equipment to Meet Your Needs

Electric lawn tools have some limitations, so the size and terrain of your outdoor space are important considerations when purchasing new equipment. When comparing gas-powered and electric mowers, consider the torque rating—this is the driving force behind a blade's rotation. On average, electric lawnmowers generate less torque than gas mowers. If you have a challenging outdoor space that includes overgrown brush, tall grass, or hills and dips, torque is a key factor.

Choosing the right type and size mower is particularly important for spaces larger than half an acre. If you have a large property, consider purchasing an extra battery to

## Making the Switch to **ELECTRIC LAWN EQUIPMENT**

Considering electric equipment to maintain your outdoor space? Check out the benefits of electric and considerations before making the switch.



### Benefits of Electric Equipment

- Battery-powered equipment produces zero emissions
- No hassle and mess from gasoline and oil
- Quieter and more reliable than gas-powered equipment
- Require less energy to do the same amount of work as gas-powered tools

### Considerations Before Going Electric

- Purchasing from a single brand can streamline charging
- Consider the size of your property and battery run time
- Backup batteries may be needed for larger properties
- Electric equipment is pricier up front

ensure uninterrupted workflow.

Many manufacturers offer interchangeable batteries and chargers, providing flexibility and convenience. Choosing a single brand can ensure charging compatibility across your lawn tools and streamline charging.

While both gas and electric lawn tools can get the job done, electric equipment generally requires less maintenance, is less expensive to operate and is kinder to the environment.

### Get Green for Going Green

Electric tools are quietly redefining the way we approach lawn care. If you're planning to make the switch to electric lawn equipment, visit your local utility's website to explore available rebates and incentives. Our energy advisors are available to share energy-saving advice to help you save money and clear the path to a greener, more energy efficient future.



*Opposite: Neuton battery-powered mowers run on a rechargeable DURACELL battery. Photograph provided by Neuton*

*Above: Cordless electric leaf blowers are lightweight and easy to maneuver. Photograph by Scott Van Osdol*

It can be easy to overlook things that we see every day, including overhead power lines. However, failure to notice overhead lines can be deadly. If you or an object you are touching contacts or gets too close to a power line, you could be seriously injured or killed.

Overhead power lines require 10 feet of clearance in all directions. This distance rule applies to the power lines draped from pole to pole that line roads (distribution lines), as well as the drop-down lines that service homes or other structures.

If your job requires you to operate equipment in the vicinity of large transmission lines and towers, they require even more clearance than distribution and drop-down lines. That clearance is determined by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). OSHA mandates line clearance distances for all types of power lines.

Be mindful of overhead power lines when completing the following tasks:

**Home maintenance** - Always be aware of the location of power lines, particularly when using long tools, such as ladders, pool skimmers and pruning poles. Lower long tools and equipment before moving or transporting them. Other safety tips include:

- Carry ladders and other long items horizontally whenever possible.
- Be careful when working on or around your roof.

- Never go on a roof in windy or bad weather.

**Yard work** - When trimming trees, do not allow yourself or trimmers to come within 10 feet of overhead power lines, including service lines to your home or outbuilding. Also:

- Do not trim trees near power lines; instead, leave this to certified line clearance tree trimmers.
- Do not use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near electric lines.

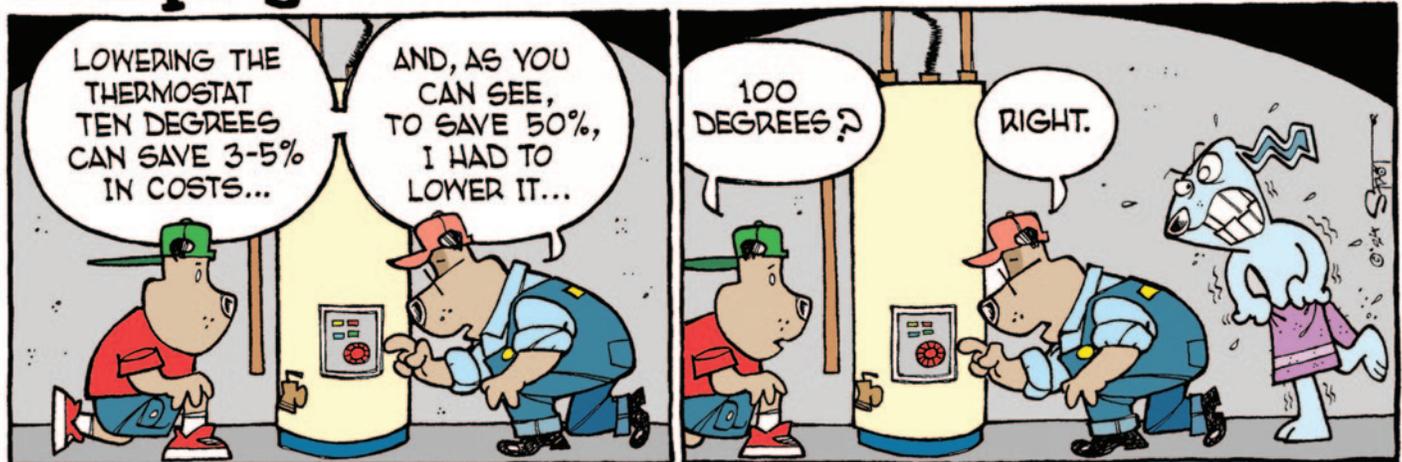
**Farming** - Review power line locations and other potential electrical hazards with all workers at morning safety meetings. Equipment that could get too close or contact a power pole or line includes sprayer tips, tall equipment, dump trucks, augers and other extensions.

**Other reminders**

- Do not come within 50 feet of a downed or damaged power line. Warn others to stay away. Call 9-1-1 to report it.
- Never climb trees near power lines. Even if the power lines are not touching the tree, they could come in contact when weight is added to the branch.

Look up and look out for overhead power lines. Contact can happen in an instant.

## Murphy



## Continued from Page 5

employment of a competent manager, as well as the approval of various consultants. The Board advises the manager on specific managerial decisions.

**Performance Evaluation:** Regular performance evaluation is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of the organization's operations. The Board reviews periodic reports from the manager, annual financial audits, and outcomes of membership meetings to ensure alignment with approved objectives and plans.

**Supportive Functions:** In addition to their core responsibilities, Board members also play a crucial role in fostering effective communication and collaboration within the

organization. Board members contribute ideas, information, and make decisions in a manner consistent with parliamentary procedure. They also participate in committee work when necessary.

**With the Manager:** Board members provide information and advice to the manager on matters concerning member interests and recognize the manager as the primary point of contact for operational issues.

**With Members:** Board members inform, advise, and garner support from members on issues affecting their interests. They also relay relevant information to operating management and maintain a positive image of the organization within the community.

In conclusion, the effective governance of your local power

provider relies on the diligent oversight and strategic guidance provided by the Board of Directors. By fulfilling their responsibilities and fostering supportive relationships, Board members can contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of the organization.



## LEAVE WILDLIFE BABIES ALONE

It is natural for some people who see a young wild animal apparently abandoned by its mother to want to rescue it. The correct course of action is to leave it alone.

Here are some rules of thumb from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission regarding wildlife babies:

- A lone fawn, or other young bird or mammal, may appear to be abandoned or injured, but the mother frequently is off feeding or drinking. Do not move it. The longer the fawn is separated from its mother, the slimmer the chance that it will be reunited with her. In some cases, other deer will adopt an orphaned fawn.
- It is normal for a doe to leave its fawn to keep it from being detected by predators. Predators can see the doe as it feeds, so she leaves the fawn hidden and leaves the area to draw attention away from the fawn's location.
- Do not try to raise wildlife babies as pets. As animals mature, they become more independent and follow natural instincts to leave and establish their own territories. Rescued animals are poorly prepared for life in the wild.
- Most wildlife babies are protected by state or federal law and it is illegal to possess them.



Just like you, the equipment in your home is hard at work getting through the daily grind. While you are off enjoying a new adventure or time away, give your home's equipment a vacation, too. Doing so can reduce unnecessary energy waste and unneeded wear and tear on your heating and cooling system, appliances and more. Here's how to set your home to vacay mode.

Your heating and cooling system keeps you comfortable. If you aren't there, it doesn't need to be quite so comfortable in your home. Setting the thermostat closer to the outdoor temperature can save you energy and money. I don't recommend completely turning off the heating or cooling system. In extreme weather, your heating and cooling system also helps protect your home from freezing pipes or damage from excessive heat.

As a rule, you can typically set your thermostat 5 to 10 degrees closer to the outdoor temperature when you aren't home. Each home is different, and the weather varies depending on where you live. Consider the right temperature balance for your home.

Installing a smart thermostat gives you the ability to control your settings remotely from your smart phone. This allows you to adjust the temperature after you leave home and right before you return.

Most water heaters include a vacation mode setting. This setting drops the temperature to reduce wasted energy when you're away. A storage water heater is like an insulated tea kettle, standing by and ready for you to have hot water whenever you need it. Give that water heater a vacation, too. Changing the setting to vacation mode keeps it on at a lower setting, saving energy. Leave yourself a note with a reminder to turn it back on when you get home, so you don't wind up with a disappointing shower before the first day back at work.

Closing the curtains can provide two benefits. It can



*Before you leave for vacation, reduce unnecessary energy waste and unneeded wear and tear on your home's equipment by following these energy-saving tips.  
Photograph by Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources*

keep heat from the sun at bay. This reduces the load on your heating and cooling system, which saves energy. It also has the benefit of blocking visibility into your home when you're away.

For security, some people use timers or leave on exterior lights. Make sure any lights left on are LEDs, instead of incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs. LEDs use less energy and have less impact on your electric use when left on all night. You can also consider adding smart LEDs to your home. Smart LEDs can be controlled remotely through an app on your phone.

Did you know there are devices in your home that continue to draw power from your electrical outlets even when turned off or on standby? Before you leave, walk through your home and unplug devices and small appliances. Make sure gaming consoles and computers are fully powered down. Unplugging any devices that have lights, clocks or use standby mode can also reduce wasted energy.

Having peace of mind that your home is powered down and secure can help you enjoy your vacation. After all, we all need an occasional break.

# 5 THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN PLANTING A TREE

Embarking on the journey of planting a tree is like adding a new character to the vibrant story of your garden—each tree has its own personality, its own role to play. Whether you're aiming to create a shady sanctuary to escape the summer heat, longing for the comforting embrace of evergreen privacy, or envisioning a bountiful backyard orchard ripe with homegrown fruit, the first chapter of this saga begins with a crucial decision: choosing the right tree and the perfect spot to plant it. From the sprawling landscapes of suburbia to the cozy confines of urban oases, the key lies in understanding your environment and tailoring your selection to suit its unique quirks and qualities.

## 1 CHOOSE THE RIGHT TREE AND LOCATION

Depending on where you live and your desired outcome, choosing the right tree and planting location are critical factors. Larger shade trees help cool homes in warmer climates, evergreens provide privacy and fruit trees offer a grocery store right in your backyard. Consider your available space along with conditions that will impact the tree itself, such as soil conditions, sun exposure, drainage and more.

## 2 KNOW WHERE TO DIG

Before digging, remember that proper tree placement requires factoring in underground utility lines, overhead power lines and proximity to sidewalks, driveways and homes. Dial 811, the national call-before-you-dig number, to locate underground utilities and consider contacting an arborist or tree care professional to make sure you've weighed all the important factors.



Photo courtesy of Pixabay

## 3 BREAK GROUND

Dig a hole that's roughly 2-3 times wider than the root ball of your tree and equally as deep as the root ball. Be sure the trunk flare (where the trunk expands at the base of the tree) is partially visible when planted. Remove any wrapping or cover from the root ball and trunk. Lift from the root ball, not the trunk, to place in the hole then straighten vertically and firmly backfill soil around the root ball to stabilize.

## 4 ADD MULCH

Mulching helps maintain moisture and improve soil conditions while controlling weed growth. Place a 2-3-inch layer in a 3-foot radius around the base of the tree without touching the trunk itself.



Photo by Liudmila Chernetska / Unsplash

## 5 KEEP SOIL MOIST

Make sure your tree has enough water to grow strong by keeping the soil moist. Typically, this means watering just once per week, barring rain, but may require more frequency during especially hot weather.

# Bring Joy Back to Family Meals

While meals savored with loved ones are intended to produce smiles and shared moments, the process of grocery shopping, planning and cooking has become a chore for many families. Take the first step toward bringing back the joy and magic of making your favorite foods with tools that do the work for you.

For example, the all-in-one Albertsons Meal Plans and Recipes tool allows you to focus on what you want to eat rather than what you need to buy as it empowers everyday home cooks to plan, shop and prepare personalized recipes based on dietary preferences, allergies or family likes and dislikes. The app features a library of 9,000 exclusive recipes created by professional chefs (with new recipes added each month) and includes tasty dishes such as Sheet Pan Cajun Shrimp Fajitas with Bell Pepper, Onion and Spicy Ranch and Cheese Tortellini and Cauliflower with Creamy Spinach Marinara.

Designed to provide culinary inspiration throughout the week while saving time and money, the app also features a budget tracker and hands-free cooking mode with a step-by-step timer.

Find more information and a seemingly endless collection of recipes at [Albertsons.com](https://www.albertsons.com).



Scan the QR Code to visit Albertsons Meal Plan and Recipe Tool



## Sheet Pan Cajun Shrimp Fajitas with Bell Pepper, Onion and Spicy Ranch

- 2 green bell peppers
- 2 yellow bell peppers
- 1 lime
- 1 medium red onion
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2 pounds raw, peeled shrimp, fresh or frozen
- 5 teaspoons Cajun seasoning, divided
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup ranch dressing
- 12 small flour tortillas

Preheat oven to 450 F. Wash and dry green bell peppers, yellow bell peppers and lime.

Trim, seed and slice bell peppers lengthwise into thin strips; transfer to large baking sheet.

Peel, halve and slice onion lengthwise into thin pieces; add to baking sheet with bell peppers.

Drizzle veggies with oil, toss to combine and spread in even layer. Bake until veggies have softened slightly, about 5 minutes.

If using frozen shrimp, place them in colander and run under cold water to thaw slightly. Place shrimp on clean towel or paper towels and pat dry.

Remove baking sheet from oven. Arrange shrimp over veggies then sprinkle with 4 teaspoons Cajun seasoning and salt; toss to combine and spread in even layer.

Bake until veggies are tender and shrimp are cooked through, 5-7 minutes. Remove from oven.

Cut lime into wedges.

In small bowl, stir ranch dressing and remaining Cajun seasoning.

Warm tortillas in skillet, oven or microwave, if desired.

Divide tortillas between plates and fill with shrimp and veggies; drizzle with spicy ranch and serve with squeeze of lime.



## Cheese Tortellini and Cauliflower with Creamy Spinach Marinara

- 2 bags (10 ounces each) cauliflower florets
- 18 ounces cheese tortellini, fresh or frozen
- 1/2 tablespoon salt
- 1 jar (24 ounces) marinara sauce
- 8 fluid ounces heavy whipping cream
- 1/2 teaspoon basil, dried
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 packages (5 ounces each) baby spinach

Fill large pot halfway with hot water, cover and bring to boil. Uncover then add cauliflower, tortellini and salt; stir for a few seconds. Cook, stirring occasionally, until just tender, about 5 minutes, or cook according to package instructions.

In separate large pot over medium heat, stir marinara sauce, cream, basil and black pepper to combine and bring sauce to simmer. Once simmering, reduce heat to medium-low and cook until slightly thickened, 3-4 minutes.

Wash and dry spinach.

When sauce has thickened, add spinach to pot in handfuls, waiting for spinach to wilt slightly before adding next handful. Remove from heat and cover to keep warm.

When cauliflower and tortellini are done, drain and add to pot with creamy marinara sauce; stir to combine.

To serve, divide pasta between plates or bowls.

## Reader Submitted Recipes

### Leonabelle's Potato Salad

- 10 lbs. potatoes, cooked and chopped into small pieces
- 24 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- 2 cups diced onion

Blend together:

- 6 cups Miracle Whip dressing
- 1/2 cup yellow mustard
- 1/2 cup vinegar
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup sugar
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Pour dressing over potatoes, eggs, and onion. Mix lightly, but thoroughly. Chill. Makes two gallons, or 60 servings.

**Jan Singleton, Hayes Center, Nebraska**

### Firehouse Favorite

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1 lb. hamburger            | 2 packages frozen noodles   |
| 1 lb. Italian sausage      | 2 cans tomato sauce and 1 can tomato soup; Or 1 jar spaghetti sauce |
| 2 cups diced green peppers | 1 lb. grated longhorn cheese or mozzarella                          |
| 2 cups diced celery        |   |
| 1 medium onion, diced      |   |
| 2 cans mushrooms           |   |

Cook meat, drain, sauté onions, peppers and celery. Cook noodles for 8 minutes. Combine all ingredients except cheese. Bake 350 degrees for 35 minutes. Top with cheese and melt. Will make 2 large 9" X 13" or more dishes so you can freeze one.

**Bonnie Ross, McCook, Nebraska**

### Fruity Pie

- 1 box strawberry Jell-O
- 2/3 cup boiling water
- 2 cups ice cubes
- 1 8 oz. container Cool Whip
- 1 carton fresh strawberries
- 1 pie crust

Dissolve Jell-O in boiling water, stirring constantly. Add ice cubes and continue stirring until Jell-O is thickened, about 2 – 3 minutes. Remove unmelted ice cubes. Using wire whip, blend in Cool Whip and add fresh strawberries. Chill until mixture mounds and put in pie crust. Chill for 2 hours. (Can also use peach Jell-O and fresh peaches.)

**Karen Christensen, Harvard, Nebraska**



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# REACHING TO SAFETY:

## Use Extension Cords Properly

Roughly **3,300 home fires** originate in extension cords each year, **killing 50 people and injuring 270 more**. Extension cords can overheat and cause fires when used improperly, so keep these important tips in mind to **protect your home and workplace**.

**DON'T** attempt to **plug extension cords into one another**.



Make sure extension cords are **properly rated** for their intended use, indoor or outdoor, and **meet or exceed the power needs** of the appliance or device being used.



Keep all **outdoor extension cords** clear of snow and standing water.



Do **NOT** overload extension cords.



A heavy reliance on **extension cords** is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs. Have **additional outlets installed** where you need them.



Inspect cords for **DAMAGE** before use. Check for **cracked or frayed sockets**, loose or bare wires, and loose connections.



Do **NOT** **nail or staple electrical cords** to walls or baseboards.



Do **NOT** run through **walls, doorways, ceilings or floors**. If cord is covered, heat cannot escape, which may result in a **FIRE HAZARD**.



**NEVER** use **three-prong plugs** with outlets that only have two slots. **Never cut off the ground pin to force a fit**, which could lead to electric shock.



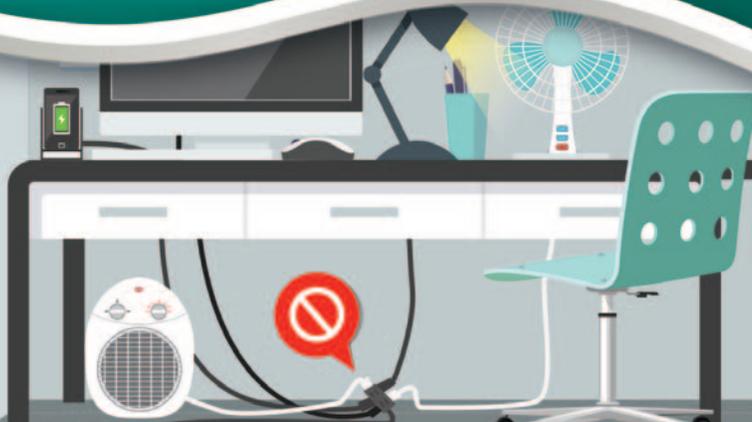
Buy only cords that have been **approved** by an **independent testing laboratory**.



Do **NOT** substitute **extension cords** for permanent wiring.



**DO NOT** use an **extension cord** or a **power strip** with **heaters or fans**, which could cause cords to **overheat and result in a fire**.





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