

# Perennial NEWS

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## The Nebraska Legislature and Public Power

The Second Session of the 108th Legislature has ended, and with it some notable changes involving public power. As the session progressed several bills were packaged together, and amendments were made to reach agreeable terms. The senators worked to pass 370 bills in the 60-day session with several late nights in the final weeks.

You might wonder with this bustle of activity, how are my interests being represented in the chamber of the unicameral when it comes to public power? The answer is through connection and communication. One way this is accomplished is through our membership in the Nebraska Rural Electric Association (NREA). In February of each year, the NREA hosts a legislative meeting where your elected board members can discuss bills and engage with senators one-on-one who will then vote or propose legislation on issues that mold the future of public power.

George Norris brought us a strong voice to make changes to our laws. When he was a U.S. senator, he fathered the Rural Electrification Act in 1936 which brought electricity to farms across the nation. Later this would result in Nebraska being the only state served exclusively by public power. Norris felt the two-house system of government was outdated, inefficient, and unnecessary. He proposed the unicameral idea and after significant controversy, Nebraska convened the one-house system in 1937.

Through our NREA lobbying, our letters, and our across-the-table discussions with senators, together we have a say in how we serve you. The

following bills have become or will become law as prescribed by the Legislature.

**LB 969.** This bill updates the sealed bid contract thresholds. It increases the threshold for utilities with gross revenues of less than \$500 million from \$250k to \$750k and increases the threshold for large utilities up to \$1.5M

This bill will help us procure essential equipment with less delay. The sealed bid process typically adds another 45-60 days to the procurement process. We have all experienced the effects of inflation and long lead times. This bill will reduce the effects of these issues by raising the threshold to \$750k for Perennial.

**LB 1300 AM 3227.** This amendment will allow public power districts to increase board member compensation based on gross revenue for districts under \$500M and for those over \$500M.

The last time a legislative adjustment was made concerning director compensation was in 2001. This revised compensation limit will take effect at the beginning of next year.

**LB 1370.** One piece of this bill outlines an excise tax for electric vehicles (EVs). In January 2028, there will be an imposed excise tax of three cents per kilowatt hour for energy used to charge electric vehicles or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles at commercial charging stations.

Another portion of the bill stipulates that an electric power supplier who wants to install a Direct Current (DC) charging station, would need

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### On Our Cover:

Scammers are everywhere. Make sure you are being safe when dealing with your financial information.

# 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 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 Perennial's EnergyWise website at <https://perennialpower.energywisenebraska.com/lawngarden/> to explore available rebates on any new electric chainsaw, tiller, snow blower or lawn mower.

Source: Consumer Reports

### 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



# Energy Scams Unmasked

Consumers with water, gas, and electricity connections have long been targets for utility scams. But in today's digital world, every swipe and click increases the risk of potential scams.

Scammers are more sophisticated than ever before, and they understand our increasing reliance on technology. With their sharpened digital knives, scammers have adapted their tactics to trick unsuspecting consumers through a variety of methods.

Perennial wants to help you avoid energy scams. Here are some updates on the latest utility scams, as well as tips to help you stay safe from even the craftiest scammers.



## Recent Utility Scams

Scammers typically disguise themselves - either physically or digitally, as utility employees or representatives to steal consumers' money or personal information. A common trick is to claim a consumer's bill is past due and threaten to disconnect service if payment isn't received immediately. Scammers approach consumers through a variety of means, including phone calls, text messages, emails, and even in-person visits. However, the digital line of attack is increasingly more common.

For example, new capabilities disguising caller ID or "spoofing" can make the phone number you see on caller ID appear to be from a trusted source. Spoofing makes it easier for scammers to deceive you because it's more difficult to immediately verify the call. Another recent scam uses fraudulent websites that are identical to a utility payment webpage, and what's worse, these pages are often promoted on search engines to trick consumers into clicking and making a payment.

Another recent scam involves phone calls, text messages, or emails claiming you overpaid your electric bill and will receive cash, a refund to your bank account, or a credit card. This offer may seem too good to be true, and it is, it's likely a scam aimed to steal your personal information.

## Spotting a Scam

There are several red flags you can watch for to identify an energy scam.

- Scammers often use high-pressure tactics to create a sense of urgency, like claiming your electricity or other services will be disconnected if a payment isn't made immediately.
- Additionally, scammers may ask for unusual payment methods such as gift cards or cryptocurrency. If someone is pushing for an unusual payment method, it's likely a scam.
- You've probably noticed that many digital scams, like emails or text messages, include poor grammar, spelling errors, and odd email addresses. These are red flags, so when you see these dodgy forms of communication, consider it a potential scam.

## What Perennial Will (and Won't) Do

Perennial will never demand an instant, immediate payment and threaten to disconnect your service without mailing a disconnect notice or attempting courtesy phone calls. We strive to resolve challenging situations and work with our customers to avoid disconnects.

Perennial will never initiate a phone call or email asking for your Social Security number or banking details. We offer several secure payment options, including automatic bank draft, in-person, online at <https://perennialpower.com/pay-your-bill/>, scheduled payments via SmartHub, and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) by calling 1-877-487-4642.

## Avoiding Scams

Whether in-person, over the phone, or online, always be suspicious of an unknown individual claiming to be a Perennial employee requesting banking or other personal information.

If you're ever in doubt about a potential energy scam, just give us a quick call at 402-362-3355 so we can assist. Perennial wants to help protect you and our community against utility frauds, and by notifying us about potential scams, you can create the first line of defense. We encourage you to report any potential scams so we can spread the word and prevent others in our community from falling victim.

## SIGNS OF AN

# ENERGY SCAM

### High-Pressure Tactics

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

### Sketchy Payment Methods

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

### Dodgy Communication

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.



# EMPLOYEE PROMOTIONS



## Jerad Kava

In April, Jerad Kava was promoted to Systems Technician by Perennial Public Power District.

Kava began working for the District on February 14, 2011 as an apprentice lineman. In his time at Perennial Kava was promoted to Journeyman Line Technician. With this current promotion, Kava will be responsible for maintaining, upgrading, and deploying Advanced Metering

Infrastructure (AMI) equipment and supporting software. Jerad will also perform Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition (SCADA) troubleshooting, maintenance, and system upgrades.

Jerad lives in York, Nebraska with his wife Aubree, along with their two children, Gavin and Anna. In his free time Kava enjoys coaching youth sports, hunting, fishing, and camping. Congratulations Jerad!



## Jeremy Styskal

In February Jeremy Styskal was promoted to Manager of Operational Technology by Perennial Public Power District.

Styskal began working for the District on October 18, 1993 as an apprentice lineman. In his time at Perennial, he was promoted to Journeyman Line Technician, Lead Line Technician, and Systems Technician. With this current promotion, Jeremy will be responsible for providing and directing all operational technology services relating to the design, long and short

range planning, and field services, associated with the operational technology security, Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition (SCADA) which is used to monitor and control operations remotely, Advance Metering Infrastructure (AMI) and load management systems.

Jeremy lives in McCool Junction, Nebraska with his wife Tammy. In his free time Styskal enjoys working on small engines, fishing, and collecting old electrical artifacts. Congratulations Jeremy!

# P E R E N N I A L EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

## Brandon Lehman

General Manager



Brandon Lehman began his career at Perennial Public Power District in June of 2004 as the Systems Engineer. Lehman was promoted to Manager of Engineering in 2005 then in 2023

he was promoted again to General Manager. He is responsible for the management of all Perennial Public Power District operations. He also advises and assists the Board of Directors on the matters of District policy and key operational matters.

When asked what he enjoys most about working for the District, Lehman said, "working alongside great people to deliver excellent electric service to our customers."

Lehman received his Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering, from the University of Nebraska Lincoln in 2004. In addition to his

duties at the District, Brandon serves as a York County Extension Board Member, and an IEEE Nebraska Power and Energy Chair.

Brandon lives in York, Nebraska with his wife Amy and their three kids John, Caleb, and Anna. When not at work, Brandon enjoys hiking, hunting, fishing, and watching his kids sports teams.

Perennial is very fortunate to have an employee like Brandon who takes pride in serving the public and making sure everyone has safe and reliable electricity. Thank you Brandon, for 20 years of leadership, hard work and dedication!

## Steve Wright

Boardmember



Steve Wright has been a member of Perennial's Board of Directors since 2009. He lives on a farm northwest of Benedict, Nebraska with his wife Teresa. Steve has four children and nine grandchildren.

Wright enjoys spending time with his family, restoring Oliver tractors and owning late model dirt track race cars. Steve also serves on an

Administrative Board for Benedict Community Church.

When asked what he enjoys most about being a board member, Steve said, "Helping to maintain a safe work environment for Perennial's employees and working to keep the rates fair for all of Perennial's customers." Thank you Steve for serving the District for 15 years!



## Legislature continued from pg. 2

to give a right of first refusal to privately owned commercial charging station operators. A 15-mile radius, no-build area, of a proposed or currently operating charging station, privately owned, would prohibit electric power suppliers from building a DC charging station in that area.

Will Perennial ever build a commercial charging station? We have the opportunity to serve travelers in our service area with the location of I-80 and Highway 81 bisecting the District. But for now, we will focus on serving your electric vehicle at home. If you have recently purchased an EV or PHEV, please let us know so we can ensure that your service has adequate capacity to serve all your electrical needs. Remember to check our website for incentives related to EV or PHEV vehicles.

These new laws change the way we serve you and provide us with opportunities and challenges. We will continue to engage our senators and state associations so we can provide safe, reliable, and affordable electric power to you for generations to come.



### A Cool Breeze

Did you know ceiling fans can help you save energy? Ceiling fans create a windchill effect on your skin to make you feel a few degrees cooler. Raise the thermostat a few degrees and turn on fans to reduce air conditioning costs. Set fan blades to rotate counterclockwise during summer months and clockwise during winter months. Remember, ceiling fans cool people but don't actually lower the indoor temperature. Turn them off when you leave the room.