



Dennis, in blue, participates in a tree planting event.

Growing up outside Grand Island, Nebraska, Dennis Placke had no idea how much infrastructure, such as natural gas lines and other utility lines, was right under his feet.

Today, as NorthWestern Energy's Manager of District Operations based in Grand Island, Dennis works hard to make sure our underground natural gas lines deliver safe, reliable energy to our customers.

NorthWestern Energy is currently working to add a new 8-inch high-pressure gas line around Grand Island to increase reliability and better serve our customers.

Knowing he's benefiting our customers is one of Dennis's favorite parts of his job.

"When we're doing good work, our customers will be better off at the end of the day," Dennis said.

Dennis grew up outside Grand Island on his family's farm. He moved away to work in the energy industry. Then, about 18 years ago, he was back for a visit and saw a NorthWestern Energy border station and applied for a job with the company so he could move back to his hometown.

Now Dennis once again lives on the farm where he grew up. That gives him plenty of room to garden.

"I grow quite a few zucchinis and quite a few tomatoes," Dennis said.

Those are the perfect ingredients for Dennis's Zucchini and Tomato Casserole.

"It's one of my favorites," Dennis said of the dish, which comes from his wife's grandmother.

"My wife is a really good cook, and I'm a good eater," Dennis said with a laugh.



## Zucchini and Tomato Casserole

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium zucchini (sliced ¼ inch thick)
- 2-3 medium tomatoes (Roma or small slicers, sliced in ¼ inch thick)
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- Approx. 1 cup shredded Mozzarella cheese
- ½ teaspoon of dried basil, or 1 ½ tablespoons of fresh basil, snipped
- ¼ teaspoon of garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Pre heat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. Spray 9x9 baking dish with non-stick spray.
- 2 Layer sliced zucchini in over lapping rows to cover the bottom of the casserole dish. Lightly salt and pepper the zucchini layer.
- 3 Place tomatoes in a single layer over the zucchini. Spread the mayonnaise in a light layer over the tomatoes.
- 4 Top with the shredded cheese and then sprinkle garlic powder and basil over the cheese layer.
- 5 Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove foil and continue baking an additional 15-20 minutes until the cheese is lightly browned and the zucchini is tender when pierced with a fork.

Note: Casserole can also be grilled in an aluminum pan over indirect heat on the grill for roughly 30 minutes.

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[NorthWesternEnergy.com](http://NorthWesternEnergy.com)    

We are proud of the diversity in the communities we serve. To better serve the needs of some of our customers, we translate important customer information into two languages: Spanish and Karenic.

Estamos orgullosos de la diversidad en las comunidades que servimos. Para satisfacer mejor las necesidades de algunos de nuestros clientes, traducimos información importante del cliente a dos idiomas: español y karenic.

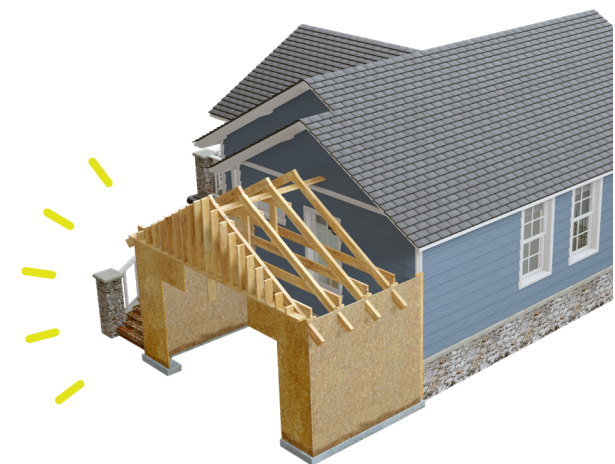
ပညာတော်အသုံးအကျိုးတို့ကိုကူညီပေးရန်အတွက်အားထုတ်ဆောင်ရွက်နေပါသည်။ ၎င်းတို့၏လိုအပ်ချက်များကိုကူညီပေးရန်အတွက်အားထုတ်ဆောင်ရွက်နေပါသည်။ ၎င်းတို့၏လိုအပ်ချက်များကိုကူညီပေးရန်အတွက်အားထုတ်ဆောင်ရွက်နေပါသည်။ ၎င်းတို့၏လိုအပ်ချက်များကိုကူညီပေးရန်အတွက်အားထုတ်ဆောင်ရွက်နေပါသည်။

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# Energy Connections

Customer Bill Insert  
**Montana | June 2023**

In this issue: Wildfire Mitigation Efforts | National Volunteer Week | Hydro Safety | Zucchini and Tomato Casserole



**Bright ideas to save**

## Home Renovations?

Before embarking on renovation plans, schedule a FREE Home EnergyCheck to help you make wise decisions to improve energy usage. Learn more at [NorthWesternEnergy.com/EnergyCheck](http://NorthWesternEnergy.com/EnergyCheck).



## Our expanded wildfire mitigation efforts

Due to the growing threat of catastrophic wildfires, NorthWestern Energy is exploring new ways to protect our customers and communities from wildfires. Earlier this spring, we released our 2024 Wildfire Mitigation Plan.

The purpose of this plan is to identify the risks of operating an electrical grid in wildfire-prone areas and implement strategies to reduce or manage these risks. Our Wildfire Mitigation Plan represents our commitment to protecting our customers and the communities in Montana from this growing threat.

We expect wildfire risk to continue to grow in the coming years and decades, but NorthWestern Energy continues to be committed to providing safe and reliable energy to our customers.

### What is NorthWestern Energy doing to prevent wildfires?

- **A resilient electrical grid** – Starting in 2010, NorthWestern Energy began a major investment in our electrical grid. Our vision was for a distribution system that is reliable, able to grow, optimized, responsive to all customers, energy efficient, cost effective and state of the art. While these investments did not focus specifically on wildfire mitigation, effective management of our transmission and distribution assets provided a foundational core to reduce wildfire risk.
- **Vegetation management** – We have proactive efforts in place to mitigate trees or tree branches falling into power lines, to maintain healthy forests and to decrease fuel loading. This includes doing aerial and ground assessment of our powerlines and removing any vegetation that is at high-risk of causing a wildfire.

- **Situational awareness** – We have a Wildfire Operational department which focuses on monitoring weather forecasts and environmental conditions across our service territory. We're also implementing new field cameras that will allow us to monitor our system and detect wildfires as soon as they start.
- **Operational practices** – New system technologies provide us with the ability to actively change how the electrical grid operates during high-risk conditions. We may also adjust work practices such as tool choice, vehicle access routes or the potential stoppage of proactive work.
- **System preparedness** – We're increasing the scope and frequency of ground and aerial assessments of our electrical system so we can repair issues before they cause fires. We're also using a technology called Lidar to evaluate portions of the system and using a risk model to prioritize maintenance work.
- **Communication and outreach** – Ensuring the safety of customers and the public is of utmost importance to NorthWestern. The strategy to achieve this includes informing the public on NorthWestern's efforts to mitigate wildfire risk, proactively communicating as conditions change, potentially causing interruption to electric service, and outreach after an event has occurred to keep the public apprised of the situation.
- **Public Safety Power Shutoffs** – As a last resort, we will de-energize electrical infrastructure in specific areas, during periods of time where the risks of continuing to operate electrical infrastructure are unacceptably high. Known as Public Safety Power Shutoffs, or PSPS, this is an increasingly common method for energy companies to prevent wildfires. Read more about our PSPS plan in the July issue of Energy Connections.

Read our complete Wildfire Mitigation Plan at [NorthWesternEnergy.com/wildfireplan](https://NorthWesternEnergy.com/wildfireplan).



## NorthWestern gives back during National Volunteer Week

NorthWestern Energy celebrated National Volunteer Week in late April with community service projects across our service territory. Employees planted trees, picked up trash, worked at food banks and more, and NorthWestern Energy made donations to the organizations employees volunteered with in recognition of their work.

A few service projects include:

- About 100 employees in Butte picked up trash and volunteered at the YMCA, Rescue Mission and Emergency Food Bank.
- 30 Bozeman employees volunteered at the HRDC, filling hundreds of 'Kidspacks' for children in the community to make sure they have food over the weekend.
- Great Falls employees cut and laid sod at a local baseball field and picked up trash at the soccer fields.
- Helena employees helped the Lake Helena Watershed Group pick up trash along York Road.

## Stay safe near hydro facilities this summer

### Be Dam Safe

**Stop:** Take time to read the safety signs around dams and waterways.

**Look:** Watch for increased water velocity or water rising over previously exposed rocks or brush.

**Listen:** Listen for warning sirens that signal when the dam spill gates open.

Remember, never take your boat past restrictive cables or warning signs. Depending on maintenance schedules and periods of high river flow, boat restraining systems upriver of a dam may not be in place. Never wade or swim alone.