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# NEASKAN

January 2018

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# RURAL ELECTRIC NEBRASKAN

"The Rural Voice of Nebraska"

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Published monthly by the Nebraska Rural Electric Association, 1244 K Street, Box 82048, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501, (402) 475-4988.

Advertising in the *Rural Electric Nebraskan* does not imply endorsement for products by the Nebraska Rural Electric Association. Correspondence should be sent to Wayne Price, Editor, *Rural Electric Nebraskan*, Box 82048, Lincoln, NE 68501.

The *Rural Electric Nebraskan* is printed by the Aradius Group, 4700 F Street, Omaha, NE 68117. Form 3579 should be sent to the Rural Electric Nebraskan, Box 82048, Lincoln, NE 68501.

Periodicals postage paid at Lincoln, Neb. POSTMASTER: send address changes to the Rural Electric Nebraskan, 1244 K Street, Box 82048, Lincoln, NE 68501.

Publication numbers are USPS 071-630 and ISSN 0193-4937.

Rates: \$10 for one year; \$15 for two years; \$20 for three years, plus local and state tax.

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## On the cover

Sandhills Images photographer Bob Rooney captured this shot of a frost-covered windmill. He is a farmer and photographer from Brewster, Neb.



by Wayne Price

## Think twice before turning on the space heater

**M**y first job in the electric utility industry was working for Norris Public Power District in Beatrice, Neb. One of my duties was as an energy advisor, which included working with Norris customers to help lower their monthly electric bill. I would perform an energy audit for customers that were concerned about their electric use and wanted to find ways to cut back.

Some customers would reach out to the utility because they felt their bill was just too high. We called these “High Bill Complaints.” Typically these surged during the summer and winter months when people would change their habits around heating and cooling the home. During the audit, I would walk-through the entire home with the home owner, looking for areas of concern or just simple clues to what might be causing their increase in electric use.

Many times it was easy to spot the culprit behind their complaint. One time a customer contacted me and he just felt that the bill was too high and wanted some ideas to help lower it. As we talked during the energy audit, he mentioned that he had three teenage children at home. We came to discover that much of their electric use was going towards water heating because of the amount of clothes being washed and the long showers being taken. The home had two large electric water heaters that were trying to keep up with the hot water demand.

Another time, I discovered a customer was running three 1,500-watt space heaters in different rooms of the house. She felt like the rooms were overly cold and used the space heaters in addition to the home’s central heating unit to raise the temperature. When I showed her the cost breakdown for an extra 4,500 watts on her electric bill, she was shocked.

It is best to use a space heater if you need to warm up just one or two rooms, or if you need temporary heat in a garage or shed or an area that is not normally heated. For folks that are more sensitive to the cold, it can be more efficient to run a space heater in the room they occupy most often rather than trying to heat the entire house.

Most of us have seen those ads claiming that you can save up to 50 percent on your heating bill by using a “special” space heater. It’s easy to see those ads and think “Hey, last winter I spent a lot of money trying to keep warm. I could cut that amount in half this year!”

Here’s the real story: all electric space heaters provide 100 percent efficient electric heat, regardless of how much you paid for them. In order to realize any savings, you would have to lower the whole house thermostat at least five degrees when using the space heater and only use it to heat the room you are in. That means you have to take it with you from room to room. Homes that already use a heat pump or high-efficiency furnace will find it difficult to achieve significant savings this way.

Most of the customer testimonials about lower bills are from folks that drop the main thermostat to around 50 degrees and use the space heater in the room they are occupying at the time. By doing this, the savings they report doesn’t come from running the space heater, but rather from not heating the rest of the house. Unfortunately, most people don’t realize this. People that don’t lower the main thermostat could actually spend more by heating the home while also using a space heater.

You also need to remember that few people ever achieve the maximum savings that heater manufacturers claim they can. Following the heating season, most homeowners are quite disappointed they did not save what they expected and become upset that they paid a large amount, sometimes as much as \$299.00, for a heater that generated the same amount of heat as one they could have bought for less than \$100.

Here’s something to keep in mind if you do purchase an electric space heater: all resistance-based electric heaters are 100 percent efficient at converting electricity to heat. The cheapest 1,000-watt heater will create heat just as efficiently as the most expensive one and in the same manner. Companies that claim their units are more efficient than other models are simply not being honest.



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# NREA welcomes Kim Christiansen as General Manager

The Nebraska Rural Electric Association has appointed Kim Christiansen as their new general manager and executive vice president. She assumed her responsibilities on November 13, 2017.

Christiansen joins the Nebraska Rural Electric Association from the Kansas Electric Cooperatives Inc., where she served as director of government relations and legal counsel. Christiansen brings three decades of organizational leadership to NREA from her past experiences in Kansas.

"I am excited to join the dedicated staff at the Nebraska Rural Electric Association and work with them to continue the great work they are engaged in," Christiansen said. "Together, we will work to provide our members and the rural Nebraskans they serve, with reliable, safe and affordable electric services that enhance Nebraska's economy

and improve their lives."

Christiansen holds a bachelor's degree from Fort Hays State University, a master's degree in administration and supervision from Wichita State University, and a law degree from the University of Kansas. She has taught at the high school and collegiate levels. She has served as executive director for the Kansas Corporation Commission, general counsel for the Kansas Water Office and served as chief counsel of the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

The NREA is the private non-profit trade association for 33 rural electric systems that provide electric service to consumers in most of the rural areas and many of the small towns in Nebraska. Together, the more than 950 dedicated employees of our member-systems serve approximately 234,000 meters across more than 87,000 miles of line. Over the years, NREA's mission has



*Kim Christiansen  
NREA General Manager*

evolved to include a broad range of activities to assist our member-systems as they face the many challenges of providing low-cost, reliable electric service to the sparsely populated regions of Nebraska.

A safety poster with a dark background and a large red triangle. It features a car and a utility pole with power lines. The text is in white and orange. The title is in large orange letters. The list of instructions is in white. The warning text is in orange. The logo is in the bottom left corner.

## KNOW WHAT TO DO IF IN AN AUTO ACCIDENT WITH POWER LINES


Even if you do not touch lines or equipment, you can still be killed or seriously injured.

1. Do NOT leave the car, and warn others to stay away.
2. Call 911 to have the utility notified.
3. Wait until a utility professional has told you it is safe.

The only reason to exit the vehicle is if it's on fire.

If the car you are in hits a utility pole, your vehicle and the surrounding area can become energized.

If the car is on fire, jump clear of the vehicle: with feet together, and without touching the car and the ground at the same time.

 Working for Nebraska

# Designer electricity is trending

**T**he thermostat on your wall marks a new era in electricity.

Whether it's a dial-style older than you or a digital model installed last month, it's become more than just a way to set the temperature in your home. That familiar gadget is now a gateway to a world where consumers have more say over their electric service.

You might call it designer electricity.

New technology, new regulations and new ways of thinking are reshaping the utility industry. These days, consumers can regulate the temperature in their home more precisely. They can even generate their own electricity with rooftop solar panels and sell the excess power back to their utility.

This new world started taking shape in the 1990s, says Andrew Cotter, a program manager for the Business and Technology Strategies Group of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Cutting costs and raising reliability for sensitive electronic equipment was top of mind. Companies were willing to pay extra for electric service that wouldn't blink off for even a fraction of a second. Other companies didn't need such high reliability, and looked for ways to pay less in return for occasional power interruptions.

"This is a trend that's been going on for a long time," says Cotter. "It's just starting in homes."

That little thermostat, he says, "can be the entry point for a lot of people to take advantage of smart-home technology and be more energy

efficient."

A new programmable thermostat can be set to avoid heating and cooling when you're not home, or even set separate temperatures for rooms you don't use often.

## **Efficiency makes a difference.**

And that's just the beginning of ways consumers are making more of their own energy decisions. Highly efficient LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs can be controlled from your smart phone. Washers and dryers sense how much water and heat needs to be used to clean and dry your clothes.

All that efficiency makes a difference. Americans used about 2 percent less electricity in the past three years according to the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration (EIA). EIA expects that trend to continue for at least the next couple of years.

"Efficient technologies really make a big difference," says Cotter.

While efficiency saves energy dollars, the story of battery storage shows the bigger picture of how consumers are putting utility decision-making into their own hands.

The story began with homeowners using portable, motorized generators to power refrigerators and other crucial appliances during extended electric outages. Then battery technology improved, driven by the demand for smaller and stronger chargers for smartphones and other electronics. Battery companies thought their new and improved product could grab part of the

portable generator market. Two years ago, Tesla, the high-end electric car company, announced a battery designed to look attractive enough to hang on your wall and provide backup power. Other companies followed.

In addition to promising relief from power outages, Tesla promoted its battery to the growing renewable energy market. Homeowners installing solar panels on their roofs ran into a problem—they generated a lot of electricity in the middle of a sunny day, when no one was home to use it, and none at night, when they were home wanting to use electricity. Batteries could store the sunlight.

## **Public power and the empowered consumer**

More options for consumers complicates work for electric utilities. Their business model didn't plan for consumers storing electricity, reversing the flow through power lines as they sell electricity back to the utility, or for the declining sales resulting from energy efficiency.

"Utilities are navigating a lot of difficult decisions. They're not selling as many kilowatt hours," says NRECA's Andrew Cotter. "They're selling technology that reduces sales, so they're working to come up with a sustainable business model. There are no easy answers."

Public power districts and electric co-ops are well-suited to working toward those answers, says Cotter. He sees the member-owned, not-for-profit business structure as an advantage in a more consumer-centric industry. He says innovation can be broadly tested in the network made up of more than 900 public power districts and electric co-ops across the country. He even sees a plus in their geography—their service territories tend to be in rural areas.

"Rural electric utilities are in a unique position, with long power lines that have to cover a much larger area," he says. That is leading to use of energy storage technology

to run pilot programs testing utility-scale batteries. “It might be really expensive to hook the last person up to the end of three or four miles of line. They might be in a more natural position to adopt batteries for use those remote locations.”

No single rural electric utility has to test all the new ideas, says Cotter. The nearly 1,000 utilities share results from small pilot programs across the country. They’re experimenting on batteries, incorporating home renewable energy projects into the electric grid and making the most effective use of energy-efficient technologies.

“Rural electric utilities are developing a more robust understanding of how consumers want to use electricity,” says Cotter. “They are all working together so one utility doesn’t have to do all the testing. There are no top-down solutions.”

While the march toward more choices in electric service might seem inevitable, Cotter sees it as “an uphill battle” because of one key question—is it worth it?

“Do you want to spend \$10,000 for a photovoltaic system on your roof and another \$10,000 for a battery to avoid 45 minutes a year of power outage?” he asks.

And that’s where your old-fashioned thermostat could put you on the cutting edge of the trend toward more customer choice—you can decide you like things the way they are.

“People are generally happy with their electric service,” says Cotter. While a lot of hobbyists might want to design their own new ways to manage their electricity, a lot of others “don’t want to pay money for hardware only to save a few dollars a year.”

Cotter advises rural electric utility members to check with their local public power district or electric co-op before making major power-use decisions. He says that in this new era of more energy options, vendors will be promoting batteries, solar panels and other gizmos.

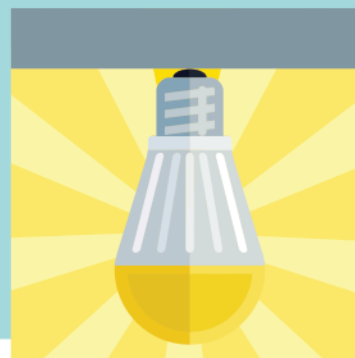
“Talk to your utility first because they’re the local energy expert,” he says. “Vendors have a goal of selling products. The rural electric utility, as a not-for-profit, member-owned utility has a different perspective that will be more in your interest.”

# DESIGNER ELECTRICITY

Consumers now have more options in how they use electricity, which means big changes for electric utilities. Here are a few of the major trends and developments:

## Energy Efficiency

Efficient lightbulbs and other appliances have actually reduced electricity sales, even as the population increases, the economy improves and we use more electronic devices.

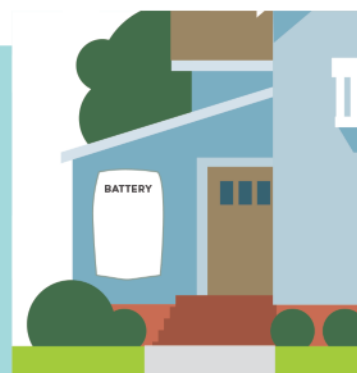


## Renewable Energy

The use of rooftop solar panels is increasing enough so that some utilities notice a decrease in sales during the sunniest part of the day. Homeowners with solar panels are selling excess electricity back to the utility.

## Bigger, Better Batteries

Spurred by research into stronger batteries for electric cars and smart phones, you can now buy a battery powerful and pretty enough to hang on your wall as a backup during power outages. Potential buyers should note: That cool gizmo can currently cost up to \$10,000!



# Metal thefts still a problem despite drop

by Michael W. Kahn

**T**hieves are willing to go to almost any length to steal metal, especially copper. They have stripped sheets of metal from building rooftops, stolen memorial decorations from cemeteries, ripped apart air conditioners for the copper coils within, and stripped homes and buildings of wiring and piping. Construction sites are frequent victims because metal is often left on-site unguarded and relatively unsecured.

Farm equipment such as irrigation pipes and fixtures are also targeted. The thieves can endanger the safety of themselves and those in the surrounding community, and weaken the infrastructure vital to our everyday lives. Unoccupied buildings have exploded due to gas lines being stolen. Stretches of highway have been left dark and tornado warning sirens have been rendered inoperable due to wiring being stolen.

Thieves have removed wiring from traffic and railway signals and even posed as utility workers in order to remove large sections of utility cable from the sewers beneath city streets. Electrical substations are frequently targeted and some thieves have been electrocuted trying to steal live electrical wiring.

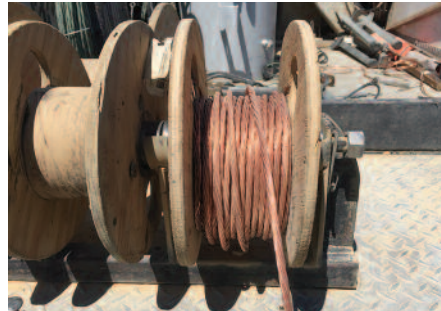
Insurance claims for metal theft continue to fall, but the problem is far from over for public power districts, electric cooperatives, and others, a new report shows.

The National Insurance Crime Bureau said 28,040 claims were processed from 2014 through 2016. That's down 22 percent from the period of 2013 through 2015.

Throughout all four years, copper accounted for 98 percent of the metals reported stolen and, for the most part, copper prices fell over that time—meaning thieves got less for

their efforts.

“When the number of metal theft claims and copper prices are compared, a statistically significant positive correlation was found to exist,” the NICB report said.



*Despite a decrease in thefts, copper, like this on the back of a co-op truck, remains a temptation for bad guys.*

According to Bloomberg, COMEX copper prices went from \$3.69 per pound on Jan. 4, 2013, to \$2.50 per pound on Dec. 30, 2016. However, prices have been rising this year, and on Nov. 24, 2017, copper closed at \$3.19 a pound.

NICB also said laws targeting metal theft have helped, including measures requiring sellers to show identification and receive payments by checks.

“Some states and local governments have increased the penalties associated with metal theft or are charging thieves with additional crimes if the theft caused damage to infrastructure or created a hazard to the public,” the report noted. As public power districts and electric co-ops can attest, fixing the damage is often far more expensive than replacing the copper.

But laws aren't a foolproof solution.

“Identifying stolen metal is not always possible, and opposition to these laws has made it difficult to get

effective measures passed in some areas,” NICB said. “Even in areas where such laws exist, some unscrupulous scrap dealers may not abide by them, and enforcement of the laws has not always been a major priority until recent years when increases in metal thefts brought more attention to the problem.”

And it is a problem, because as the report points out, “thieves have been willing to go to almost any length to obtain the metal.” Rural electric utilities are among the victims, with NICB noting that “electrical substations are frequently targeted, and some thieves have been electrocuted trying to steal live electrical wiring.”

It's something Ohio's Electric Cooperatives knows all too well. NICB said Ohio had 3,060 metal theft claims from 2014 through 2016, the most of any state, though it's down from the 4,042 recorded 2013-2015.

“We are glad to see the overall numbers coming down, and we have noticed some decline in Ohio, but we remain on top of this tarnished list of states for metal theft,” said Dwight Miller, director of safety and loss control at Ohio's Electric Cooperatives. “Thieves in Ohio continue to jeopardize the safety of Ohio's cooperative employees, the public, and especially themselves for a few bucks in scrap metal cost.”

Miller noted that different types of metal play a vital part in the transmission and distribution system. “And one wrong cut of copper—the most popular type of metal to steal—can cause a grounded component to become energized at thousands of volts, leading to severe injury and damage to expensive equipment that the member ultimately pays for.”

Following Ohio, the other states in the top five for metal theft claims were New Jersey (2,661), Pennsylvania (2,435), New York (2,005) and Illinois (1,448). Nebraska was listed in 39th place (98) in the report, while South Dakota was 50th (5) and Wyoming was 51st (3).

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# Make the best choice to brighten your night

by Cory Fuehrer

**M**y grandpa is so proud of the yard light on his farm. Installed in June of 1986, it has operated from dusk-to-dawn for more than 11,000 nights in a row. Grandpa loves bragging to his buddies at the coffee shop how it always has come on at sunset and off at sunrise. Sadly, I need to share news with him about his 175-watt mercury vapor (MV) yard light that he is not going to like.

After operating for over 130,000 hours, his MV light is producing less than 20 percent of its original light output due to lamp lumen depreciation. Even so, it still uses the same amount of electricity as the first day he turned it on. On a dark night, I can stand directly under the fixture and see that it is functioning. But when I pull a book out to read, I cannot even discern the chapter titles. This is simply the nature of MV bulbs or lamps. In fact, most MV lamps that operate from sundown to sunup lose 20 percent or more of their output in their first two years.

The disadvantages of grandpa's MV light do not end there. If he shuts it off or if the power blinks, his light requires a "cool-off" and a "warm-up"

period of five to seven minutes before returning to its previous light output. Moreover, MV lamp ballasts are noisy as his is always loudly buzzing when it is on. If my grandpa needs to replace the ballast in his fixture, he will find that under the Energy Policy Act of 2005, manufacturers cannot make or import ballasts for mercury vapor lights after Jan. 1, 2008. But, alas, his old ballast never fails.

So how am I going to convince Grandpa to send his MV light the way of the Dodo bird and install a new, energy-efficient LED area light? First, I will point out the money he will save by switching to a quality 40-watt LED. His current MV light uses about 880 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity a year. At his average rate of 11¢/kWh, operating his light is adding about \$97 every year to his electric bill. A quality 40-watt LED area light will only use about 175 kWh at a cost under \$20 per year. With the purchase price of the new 40-watt LED area light around \$120, his savings will pay for the new light in fewer than two years!

Next, I will point out how he is no longer getting the amount of light he originally paid for. After 8,000 hours of operation, his old MV light is producing only 80 percent of its original output. After 20,000 hours of operation, the 40-watt LED area light

will still provide more than 90 percent of its original output. This is especially important since we tend to require more light to see as we age. Hopefully, this will appeal to Grandpa's safety aspects.

Finally, if all else fails, I will make a plea to Grandma. Grandma has Entomophobia (fear of bugs). The vast majority of nighttime insects are photophilic (attracted to light). Most LED lights attract fewer insects than conventional MV lamps because they emit very little light in the ultra-violet part of the spectrum. Conversely, MV lights are heavy emitters in the ultra-violet spectrum which readily attracts swarms. If I inform Grandma of this fact, I have a feeling Grandpa will be installing a new 40-watt LED area light immediately.

Your local utility and Nebraska Public Power District want to help you make the best choices to brighten your nights. This commitment to providing you outstanding customer service includes helping you make the most of the energy you use throughout the year. For more ideas on how you can make your home or business EnergyWise, contact your local utility or visit [www.nppd.com](http://www.nppd.com).

*Cory Fuehrer is an Energy Efficiency Program Manager at Nebraska Public Power District.*



*Tim Kraft, a Journeyman Lineman at Norris Public Power District, hooks up an LED yard light. Photograph by Vicky Jurgens*

## Safety tips for using portable, standby generators

The growing popularity of emergency generators to help keep food safe and lights on has resulted in several million being placed in homes and small businesses across the nation.

However, only a small percentage are hooked up or used correctly. SafeElectricity.org urges consumers to understand proper generator safety steps.

Generators can be temporarily or permanently installed. A permanent generator is wired into a house by a qualified electrician using a transfer switch. This protects you, your neighbors, and repair crews from electricity backfeeding onto power lines. This can seriously injure anyone near those lines, especially utility crews working to restore power. A temporary generator fired by gasoline or diesel fuel should not be attached to a circuit breaker, fuse, or outlet.

The improper use of a standby generator can lead to injury or death.

### Generate Safely

Safe Generator Operation

Keep this card in your home's emergency kit or with your generator.

- ☐ Never connect a standby generator into your home's electrical system. There are only two safe ways to connect a standby generator to your equipment:

**Stationary Generator:** An approved generator transfer switch, which keeps your house circuits separate from the electric co-op, should be installed by a professional.

**Portable Generator:** Plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator.

- ☐ Set up and run your generator in a well-ventilated area outside the home. Make sure it's out and away from your garage, doors, windows, and vents. The carbon monoxide generated is **DEADLY**.

- ☐ Use a heavy-duty extension cord to connect electric appliances to the outlet on the generator.

- ☐ Start the generator first **BEFORE** connecting appliances.



Source: SafeElectricity.org

Developed jointly by the Energy Education Council & Rural Electricity Resource Council

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by Thomas Kirk

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Every year, the U.S. is hit by many natural disasters, including snow and ice storms, tornadoes, hurricanes and wildfires. These types of disasters pose a significant threat to our communities and homes. The most important step you can take to keep you and your family safe is to prepare beforehand, but knowing what to do during and after the event is crucial as well.

Before disaster strikes, familiarize yourself with the types of disasters that are common in your region, especially if you're new to the area. Many of the specifics depend on what type of disaster you're expecting, but there are several general guidelines to keep in mind as you prepare:

- **Water:** You will need one gallon per person per day. If you assume your family of four may be stranded for a week, store a minimum of 28 gallons.
- **Food:** Stock up on non-perishable or long shelf-life items, such as wheat, soybeans, canned fruits, peanut butter, jelly and condensed soups.
- **First Aid Kit:** Make sure your kit includes adhesive bandages (assorted sizes), antiseptic wipes, aspirin, hydrocortisone ointment, scissors and a thermometer. For a full list of

suggested items, visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

• **Flashlights and candles:** Keep extra batteries and matches (in a waterproof container) on hand.

For additional guidance on emergency items to keep around the house, visit [www.ready.gov/build-a-kit](http://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit). Also consider training offered by local emergency management services such as Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) classes.

Some disasters occur suddenly, but many bring advance warnings, like hurricanes and winter storms. Pay special attention during the week leading up to the event for local and state government warnings and evacuation notices. Make sure every family member knows what your emergency plan is: staying or leaving, safe rooms in the house, where supplies are located, what to do if anyone is separated, and how to notify loved ones that you're safe after the event. It's also a good idea to know where your home's main water and gas shutoff valves are located.

While the U.S. electric grid is reliable, it is possible to lose power during a storm. The outage could be momentary or last hours or even days.

If you live in an area where loss of power after a storm could be dangerous, consider purchasing a backup generator for your home. These can cost anywhere from a few hundred to few thousand dollars, depending on your needs. Be sure to test the generator before the disaster to ensure it's operating properly.

If you don't have a backup generator and lose power, don't panic. Most power outages in the U.S. are short and will not last more than a few hours. However, without knowing in advance how long the outage will last, it's wise to assume and act as though it will last for days. Here are a few general tips for wise energy practices during a disaster:

- Consume perishable and refrigerated foods first before they spoil.
- Pack frozen foods close together and consider freezing water bottles to eliminate any air pockets. The frozen water will help keep the food cooler longer.
- Make sure you have alternative lighting sources, like candles and flashlights (with spare batteries) located throughout the home.
- Keep manual tools such as a can opener on hand to replace any electronic gadgets you typically use.
- Similar to filling a bathtub with water before a storm, make sure that all cell phones are fully charged.
- If the disaster involves lightning, unplug all electronic devices to protect against a power surge.

After the storm, be cautious when leaving your home. Listen to government warnings and use common sense when approaching any damaged buildings or fallen trees. If you see a power line that is down, always assume the wires are live and dangerous. If possible, call your local electric cooperative to report the downed power line.

With a little bit of forethought, you're highly likely to make it through a disaster without too many problems. Remember, you and your family's safety should always come first.

For more information on disaster preparedness, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).



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65-69	\$20.50	\$16.00	\$33.50	\$26.00	\$66.00	\$51.00	\$163.50	\$126.00
70-74	\$27.40	\$21.40	\$45.00	\$35.00	\$89.00	\$69.00	\$221.00	\$171.00
75-79	\$37.00	\$30.10	\$61.00	\$49.50	\$121.00	\$98.00	\$301.00	\$243.50
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## Marketing local businesses through technology

### *California-based Social Media Expert Comes To Central Nebraska*

In a tradition of bringing nationally-acclaimed experts to central Nebraska, GROW Nebraska is proud to announce that the 2018 MarkeTech Conference will feature Instagram guru Jenn Herman from San Diego, Calif. The MarkeTech Conference, Nebraska's premier conference on marketing and technology for businesses, will be on March 15, 2018 in Kearney, Neb. MarkeTech strives to make national expertise affordable and available to Nebraska's business owners, as well as those from surrounding states.

"In today's business world, you can't talk about marketing without talking about technology. With all the ways new technology and tools will impact the marketing industry in 2018, there's only one conference that really gives you both of those in one place: MarkeTech! I'm so excited to be a part of this conference and to be able to indulge in the tech talk, marketing speech, and conference

networking throughout this whole event," she said.

Herman is a social media consultant, speaker, and globally recognized Instagram expert. She is the forefront blogger on Instagram marketing and her blog, Jenn's Trends, has won the title of a Top 10 Social Media Blog in 2014, 2015, and 2016. Through her blog, consulting, and speaking Herman provides tips, resources, and training for small to medium sized businesses that need to structure their social media strategies.

She has been featured in Inc., Fox News, Yahoo Finance, and numerous other podcasts and publications. She has spoken at Social Media Marketing World multiple times, Social Media Day San Diego multiple times, as well as for various organizations. She is the author of "The Ultimate Beginner's Guide to Instagram" and "Stop Guessing: Your Step-by-Step Guide to Creating a

Social Media Strategy".

Now, she is coming to Nebraska to share her expertise with our business owners. "We're thrilled to offer a conference in central Nebraska that brings in the best minds year after year. We want to give Nebraska businesses the tools they need to reach the global marketplace and be successful," said Janell Anderson Ehrke, CEO of GROW Nebraska.

The 2018 MarkeTech Conference will feature two presentations from Jenn Herman on Instagram and Facebook. Breakout sessions will feature passionate, successful entrepreneurs, business owners, and resource providers who integrate marketing and technology. Topics include social media strategies, the latest sales tools, and how to use big data and analytics. Every session will have key takeaways that business owners can implement immediately.

The one-day conference is full of useful information. “The last few years, I’ve just concentrated on taking away one or two points so it’s not so overwhelming. I’ll have a whole list of them, I’ll narrow them down, and I’ll say ‘okay, I’m going to do those.’ And that I can handle. And they’ve always been very beneficial for me. It’s been an important part of helping my business grow.” said John Marquis, owner of Ogallala Bay Rum and the Ogallala Cream Can Supper Company.

Lindsay Buechler from Kearney Physical Therapy attended the 2017 MarkeTech Conference and appreciated the cutting edge information presented there. “I just like seeing the new marketing trends from 2017. Live video is obviously huge, so I really like that was the focus point for this year’s conference. And I think it also gives me a little confidence for when I go back to my supervisors to kind of let them know I do know what I’m doing,” said Buechler.

For the last nine years, MarkeTech has grown rapidly. With over 250 business owners and resource providers expected to attend in 2018, networking also plays a large role in the value of this conference. “My favorite part of MarkeTech is connecting with everyone that is here, connecting with the vendors, other entrepreneurs. You just get encouragement with how to move your business forward. I’ve already learned how we can use our story to further our business and show our quality in the story, and that’s what will move us forward.” said Sierra Forrest from Simply Sunflower.

This conference on technology and marketing for small business owners and entrepreneurs will be held March 15, 2018 at the Younes Center in Kearney, Nebraska. Registration opens January 1, 2018 at [www.MarketechConference.com](http://www.MarketechConference.com), with an early bird special rate of \$129 before February 28 and a full rate of \$199. Members of GROW Nebraska receive a discount to attend, with early bird pricing of \$49



*Top: Attendees took advantage of several networking opportunities at the conference last year.*

*Above left: The 2018 MarkeTech Conference will feature Instagram guru Jenn Herman from San Diego, Calif.*

*Above right: 2016 Keynote Speaker Luria Peruccit shares her knowledge and insight with Midwestern business owners.*

and a full rate of \$99. For information on sponsorship opportunities or exhibitor booths, please contact [info@grownebraska.org](mailto:info@grownebraska.org).

The MarkeTech Conference is a program of GROW Nebraska made possible with the support of amazing partners like AIM, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, and Nebraska Public

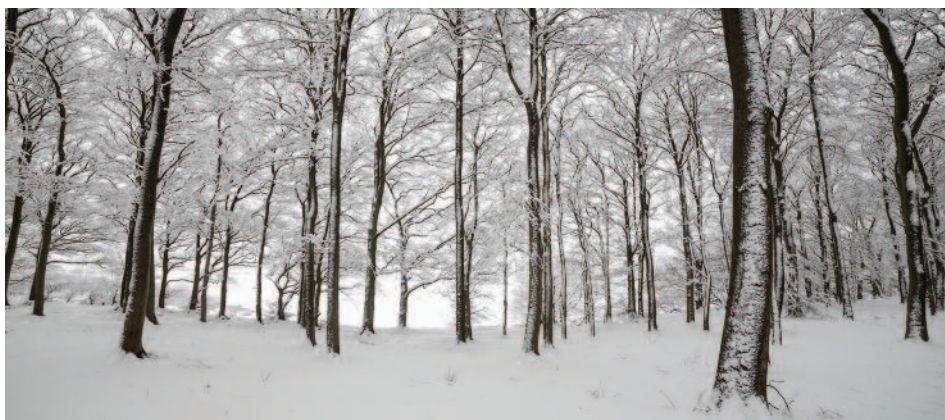
Power District. For more information on the conference, please visit the website at [www.marketechconference.org](http://www.marketechconference.org) after January 1, 2018. To learn more about GROW Nebraska, please visit [grownebraska.org](http://grownebraska.org). If you have questions, please email [info@grownebraska.org](mailto:info@grownebraska.org) or call 308.962.6767.

## Be prepared for winter storms by planning ahead

**W**hen winter temperatures drop and storms hit, it can be challenging to stay safe and warm. Winter storm severity varies depending on where you live, but nearly all Americans are affected by extreme winter storms at some point. Nebraska's public power districts and electric cooperatives care about your safety, and we want you to be prepared.

Heavy snow and ice can lead to downed power lines, leaving rural electric utility consumers without power. During extremely low temperatures, this can be dangerous. During a power outage, utility crews will continue to work as quickly and safely as possible to restore power, but there are a few things you can do to prepare yourself.

- Stay warm – Plan to use a safe alternate heating source, such as a fireplace or wood-burning stove during a power outage. These are great options to keep you and your loved ones warm, but exercise caution when using, and never leave the heating source unattended. If you are using gasoline-, propane- or natural gas-burning devices to stay



warm, never use them indoors. Remember that fuel- and wood-burning sources of heat should always be properly ventilated. Always read the manufacturer's directions before using.

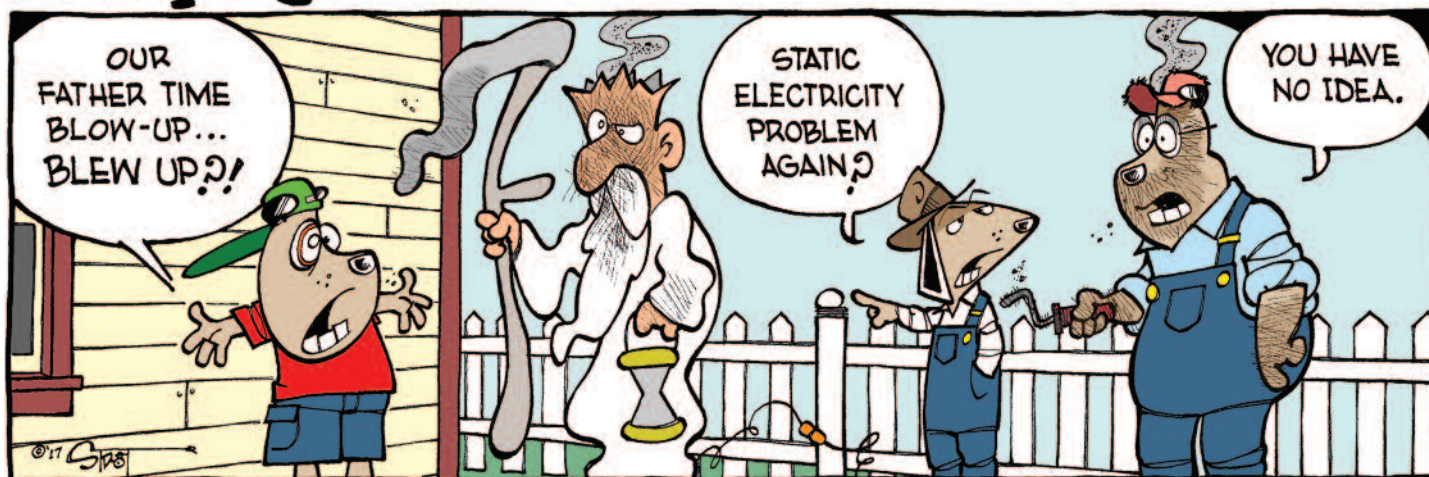
- Stay fed – The CDC recommends having several days' supply of food that does not need to be cooked handy. Crackers, cereal, canned goods and bread are good options. Five gallons of water per person should also be available in the event of an extended power outage.

- Stay safe – When an outage occurs, it usually means power lines

are down. It is best not to travel during winter storms, but if you must, bring a survival kit along, and do not travel alone. If you encounter downed lines, always assume they are energized. Stay as far away from the downed lines as possible, and report the situation to your public power district or electric co-op if possible.

Winter weather can be unpredictable and dangerous, and planning ahead can often be the difference between life and death. For more winter safety tips, visit [www.ready.gov/winter-weather](http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather).

## Murphy



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## Smart thermostat can maximize energy savings

by Pat Keegan

**Q**: We have an old dial thermostat. There seem to be a lot of choices for thermostats nowadays, but are the pricier, more tech-focused options worth the additional cost?

**A**: Today, many thermostats offer great new technologies and can do things thermostats of the past simply could not do. That said, it's certainly worth asking if these new thermostats can save enough money to justify the extra cost.

Let's start by looking at the three main options for thermostats: manual, programmable and smart.

The main benefits of a manual thermostat like yours are that it's simple to operate and there are no batteries to wear out and replace. You just have to remember to raise and lower the temperature setting in the morning and evening, and whenever you leave the house.

The second option is the programmable thermostat. Typically, this type of thermostat allows settings for four different periods each day. Some models can even handle a different schedule for each day of the week. You control the settings so they will suit your climate, schedule and temperature preferences. You can easily override your program settings anytime.

The third option is a smart, or "learning" thermostat. A smart thermostat connects to your home's Wi-Fi network. After installation, you input the basics of your schedule and temperature. Over time, as you change the settings, it learns your schedule and adjusts to minimize energy use. Smart thermostats can also detect when no one is home. You

can also control it remotely by using an app on your smart phone or tablet.

The move to smart technology is a significant investment. Units can cost up to \$400, although one manufacturer has a new model for about \$170. It's also important to



*Smart thermostats learn from your behavior to maximize energy savings.*

note not all homes have the proper wiring in place to accommodate smart thermostats, so you may need to hire a professional to handle the installation.

Back to your initial question: Are newer, more expensive thermostats worth the extra cost? How much a thermostat can save depends on how much you spend on heating and cooling your house.

You can estimate your heating and cooling expenses by examining your

electric bills (and other utility bills) related to heating your home. Compare the bills for winter and summer to those for spring and fall. Most of the difference is likely due to heating and cooling. If that amount is more than \$900 per year, which is the national average, you have a better chance of a good return on your investment.

The second factor that will determine how much you can save is how you are operating your old thermostat. If you are conscientious about adjusting the temperature to save energy when you're leaving the house or going to bed, the new thermostat may not reduce your bills that much, even if you program it correctly or if it learns your behavior.

Whichever direction you go, remember there are other ways you can use your thermostat more efficiently:

- Don't adjust the thermostat temperature drastically in the hopes of making it heat or cool your home more quickly.
- For the greatest savings during winter months, keep the temperature at or below 68 degrees Fahrenheit while you are home during the day, and cooler during the night; during summer months, keep it at or above 78 degrees Fahrenheit while you are home.
- You can save up to 10 percent off your monthly heating and cooling bill by turning back your thermostat by 7 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit for eight hours a day.
- The thermostat is just one piece of the energy efficiency puzzle. You might be able to save more by adding insulation or sealing air leaks. A professional energy audit is always the best way to identify your home's energy weaknesses.

As you make your decision, don't forget to look to your rural electric utility for advice, ratings and maybe even rebates.

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# Hearty meals to bring the family together

Gathering the family around the table with delicious, traditional meals is the ultimate combination for many home chefs like Catherine Lowe, winner of the 17th season of ABC's "The Bachelor."

Lowe, who partnered as a celebrity spokesperson with Bertolli to create this Grilled Mediterranean Stuffed Peppers recipe, enjoys adding authenticity to the table with recipes that provide homemade taste and layers of flavor.

"I pride myself on my strong Italian roots," Lowe said. "My dad taught me how to cook at a young age, and growing up, it was an event to make and enjoy dinner with his side of the family. It's

important for me to remember and celebrate that heritage."

Full of hearty vegetables you can see and taste, and inspired by the simple goodness of Tuscan cooking, Bertolli Rustic Cut Pasta sauces help bring homemade flavor to your table. Offered in four varieties – Marinara with Traditional Vegetables, Spicy Marinara with Traditional Vegetables, Roasted Garlic Marinara with Garden Vegetables and Sweet Peppers with Portobello Mushrooms – it's Lowe's secret ingredient to helping make family meals more enjoyable.

Find more family-friendly recipes to bring everyone together at [bertolli.com](http://bertolli.com).



## Grilled Mediterranean Stuffed Peppers

- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided**
- 1 1/2 cups (10 ounces) uncooked orzo pasta**
- 1 can (14 1/2 ounces) vegetable broth**
- 1 jar (23 ounces) Bertolli Rustic Cut Spicy Marinara with Traditional Vegetables Sauce, divided**
- 6 ounces crumbled feta cheese**
- 1/2 cup (2 ounces) coarsely chopped smoked almonds**
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh mint, divided**
- 6 large red, yellow or orange bell peppers, top 1/2 inch removed and seeded**

Heat grill to high.

In medium skillet on medium-high heat, heat 1 tablespoon oil. Add pasta; cook and stir 2-3 minutes, or until light golden brown. Stir in broth and 1 cup sauce; bring to boil.

Reduce heat to low; cover. Cook 4 minutes, or until pasta is al dente, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat; cool slightly.

Stir in cheese, almonds and 1/4 cup mint. Brush outsides of peppers with remaining oil. Grill 4-6 minutes, or until crisp tender and lightly marked on all sides, turning frequently; cool slightly.

Place peppers in center of 12-by-12-inch square of heavy duty foil. Bring sides of foil up and shape foil around each pepper, leaving tops open. Shape foil into stable base to secure peppers firmly. Keep upright while grilling.

Fill each pepper with 1 tablespoon sauce and about 3/4 cup orzo mixture. Grill peppers 8-10 minutes, or until filling is heated through. Remove from foil. Warm remaining sauce. Sprinkle with remaining mint before serving with warmed sauce.



### Three-Cheese Farmstand Cups

- 2 cups cooked mini penne pasta**
- 1 cup small broccoli florets, cut into 1/2-inch pieces**
- Nonstick cooking spray**
- 1/4 cup mascarpone cheese**
- 3 eggs, beaten**
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- 1 jar (23 ounces) Bertolli Rustic Cut Sweet Peppers and Portobello Mushroom Sauce, divided**
- 1 1/2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese, divided**
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil**

Heat oven to 375 F. Divide penne pasta and broccoli evenly between 12 standard muffin cups sprayed with cooking spray. Whisk in mascarpone until smooth; gradually whisk in eggs.

Stir in Parmesan, 2 cups sauce and 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese. Spoon 1/4 cup egg mixture over pasta and broccoli in each cup; with spoon press filling down gently. Bake 18-20 minutes, or until set.

Sprinkle tops with remaining mozzarella cheese halfway through bake time. Let stand 3 minutes before unmolding. Warm remaining sauce and serve over top of cups with basil.

### Country Captain Soup

- 1 1/4 lb. chicken (or pheasant), skinless & boneless cut into 1" pieces**
- 1 tablespoon curry powder**
- 1 tablespoon ginger, minced**
- 1/4 tablespoon crushed red pepper**
- 4 cups low sodium chicken broth**
- 2 cups diced tomatoes with juices**
- 1 Granny Smith apple, seeded & chopped**
- 1/4 cup Orzo**
- 2 tablespoons raisins**
- 1 teaspoon pepper**
- 1/4 teaspoon cilantro**

Spray a stock pot with non-stick spray. Sauté onion and garlic until soft. Add chicken, curry powder, ginger and crushed red pepper; stirring for about 2 minutes. Add broth, tomatoes and apple. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and simmer 20 minutes. Stir in orzo and raisins; simmer until orzo is just cooked, about 5 minutes. Season with pepper and cilantro then serve.

I make this in a crock pot after I sauté the chicken and seasonings. Cook on high stirring occasionally until chicken is done. Add broth, tomatoes and apple; cook on high for 1-2 hours. Stir in orzo and raisins. When orzo is cooked, season with pepper and cilantro then serve.

**Liz Loar, Alma, Nebraska**

### Country Crust Bread

- 2 tablespoons dry yeast**
- 2 cups warm water**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 1 tablespoon salt**
- 2 eggs**
- 1/4 cup salad oil**
- 6 – 7 cups flour**

Dissolve yeast in warm water, stir in sugar, salt, eggs, oil and 3 cups flour until smooth. Mix in remaining flour to make dough easy to handle, knead on lightly floured board until smooth and elastic. Let rise until double in size. Punch down and make into two loaves. Brush with salad oil, let rise again until double in size. Bake in 375 degrees oven for 30-35 minutes. Brush with butter or margarine.

**Leona Bendykowski, Arcadia, Nebraska**


### No Bake Reese's Fudge Bars

- 22 Reese's peanut butter cups**
- 3 cups chocolate chips**
- 1 can (14 oz.) sweet condensed milk**

Line 9x9 pan with aluminum foil and grease. Place 16 peanut butter cups in the pan. Put the can of sweet condensed milk and 3 cups chocolate chips in sauce pan on low heat, stirring until chips and milk are melted together. Spread evenly over peanut butter cups. Chop and sprinkle remaining 6 peanut butter cups on top. Press lightly into fudge. Cool and Enjoy!

**Tia Vlieger, Ruskin, Nebraska**

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# Drug Companies Fear Release of the New AloeCure

**Big Pharma stands to lose billions as doctors' recommend drug-free "health cocktail" that adjusts and corrects your body's health conditions.**

by David Waxman  
Seattle Washington:

Drug company execs are nervous. That's because the greatest health advance in decades has hit the streets. And analysts expect it to put a huge crimp in "Big Pharma" profits.

So what's all the fuss about? It's about a new ingredient that's changing the lives of people who use it. Some call it "the greatest discovery since penicillin"!

The name of the product is the AloeCure. It's not a drug. It's something completely different. And the product is available to anyone who wants it, at a reasonable price. But demands may force future prices to rise.

## **TOP DOC WARNS: DIGESTION DRUGS CAN CRIPPLE YOU!**

Company spokesperson, Dr. Liza Leal; a leading integrative health specialist recommends AloeCure before she decides to prescribe any digestion drug. Especially after the FDA's stern warning about long-term use of drugs classified as proton pump inhibitors like **Prilosec®**, **Nexium®**, and **Prevacid®**. In a nutshell, the FDA statement warned people should avoid taking these digestion drugs for longer than three 14-day treatment periods because there is an increased risk of bone fractures. Many people take them daily and for decades.

Dr. Leal should know. Many patients come to her with bone and joint complaints and she does everything she can to help them. One way for digestion sufferers to help avoid possible risk of tragic joint and bone problems caused by overuse of digestion drugs is to take the AloeCure.

**Analysts expect the AloeCure to put a huge crimp in "Big Pharma" profits.**

The secret to AloeCure's "health adjusting" formula is scientifically tested **Acemannan**, a polysaccharide extracted from Aloe Vera. But not the same aloe vera that mom used to apply to your cuts, scrapes and burns. This is a perfect strain of aloe that is organically grown under very strict conditions. AloeCure is so powerful it begins to benefit your health the instant you take it. It soothes intestinal discomfort and you can avoid the possibility of bone and health damage caused by overuse of digestion drugs. We all know how well aloe works externally on cuts, scrapes and burns. But did you know **Acemannan** has many of other health benefits?...



## **HELPS THE IMMUNE SYSTEM TO CALM INFLAMMATION**

According to a leading aloe research, when correctly processed for digesting, the Aloe plant has a powerful component for regulating your immune system called **Acemannan**. So whether it's damage that is physical, bacterial, chemical or autoimmune; the natural plant helps the body stay healthy.

## **RAPID ACID AND HEARTBURN NEUTRALIZER**

Aloe has proved to have an astonishing effect on users who suffer with digestion problems like bouts of acid reflux, heartburn, cramping, gas and constipation because it acts as a natural acid buffer and soothes the digestive system. But new studies prove it does a whole lot more.

## **SIDE-STEP HEART CONCERNS**

So you've been taking proton pump inhibitors (PPI's) for years and you feel just fine. In June of 2015 a major study shows that chronic PPI use increases the risk of heart attack in general population.

## **UNLEASH YOUR MEMORY**

Studies show that your brain needs the healthy bacteria from your gut in order function at its best. Both low and high dosages of digestion drugs are proven to destroy that healthy bacteria and get in the way of brain function. So you're left with a sluggish, slow-to-react brain without a lot of room to store information. The **acemannan** used in AloeCure actually makes your gut healthier, so healthy bacteria flows freely to your brain so you think better, faster and with a larger capacity for memory.

**Doctors call it "The greatest health discovery in decades!"**

## **SLEEP LIKE A BABY**

A night without sleep really damages your body. And continued lost sleep can lead to all sorts of health problems. But what you may not realize is the reason why you're not sleeping. Some call it "Ghost Reflux". A low-intensity form of acid reflux discomfort that quietly keeps you awake in the background. AloeCure helps digestion so you may find yourself sleeping through the night.

## **CELEBRITY HAIR, SKIN & NAILS**

Certain antacids may greatly reduce your

body's ability to break down and absorb calcium. Aloe delivers calcium as it aids in balancing your stomach acidity. The result? Thicker, healthier looking hair...more youthful looking skin... And nails so strong they may never break again.

## **SAVE YOUR KIDNEY**

National and local news outlets are reporting Kidney Failure linked to PPI's. Your Kidney extracts waste from blood, balance body fluids, form urine, and aid in other important functions of the body. Without it your body would be overrun by deadly toxins. Aloe helps your kidney function properly. Studies suggest, if you started taking aloe today; you'd see a big difference in the way you feel.

## **GUARANTEED RESULTS OR DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK**

Due to the incredible results people are reporting, AloeCure is being sold with an equally incredible guarantee.

"We can only offer this incredible guarantee because we are 100% certain this product will work for those who use it," Says Dr. Leal.

Here's how it works: Take the pill exactly as directed. You must see and feel remarkable improvements in your digestive health, your mental health, in your physical appearance, the amount inflammation you have throughout your body – even in your ability to fall asleep at night!

Otherwise, simply return the empty bottles with a short note about how you took the pills and followed the simple instructions and the company will send you...Double your money back!

## **HOW TO GET ALOECURE**

This is the official nationwide release of the new AloeCure pill in the United States. And so, the company is offering our readers up to 3 FREE bottles with their order.

This special give-away is available for readers of this publication only. All you have to do is call TOLL-FREE **1-800-586-1993** and provide the operator with the Free Bottle Approval Code: **JC025**. The company will do the rest.

**Important:** Due to AloeCure's recent media exposure, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back.

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