

Digger's Hotline now 811

Earlier this year, 811 was implemented as a statewide three-digit number for the Nebraska One Call Notification System or Digger's Hotline.

Please call 811 before you dig in your yard, build a fence, etc.

Call at least two working days in advance and ask for a "locate." Utility representatives will locate and mark all underground (gas, water, electric, phone, cable) lines. There is no charge for this service.

If any gas lines are damaged while digging, please call M.U.D. immediately at 554.7777 for repair. If water lines are damaged, please call a licensed plumber.

The 1994 Nebraska Legislature passed the One Call Notification System Act to protect public excavators and underground utilities from damage.

The revised statutes of Nebraska, from sections 76-2301 to 76-2330, states that everyone who excavates (or otherwise disturbs the surface) must first call the state One Call Notification Center.



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M.U.D. helps build energy-efficient home for Katrina victims

M.U.D. is helping a Hurricane Katrina family get a fresh start in a high-efficiency Habitat for Humanity of Sarpy County home.

Richard and **Allison Sauer** recently bought the home at 2520 Rose Lane Rd., Bellevue. They came to Bellevue in September 2005 with their two children, ages 16 and 12, after Hurricane Katrina devastated their hometown of Ocean Springs, MS.

"We couldn't go back, our housing was gone and my job was gone too. We lost everything," said **Richard Sauer**.

"The District and its employees saw an opportunity to give back to the community," said M.U.D. President **Tom Wurtz**. "We are pleased to be a partner in this project. Since the home is fueled by clean and efficient natural gas, the family will save money on future utility costs."

M.U.D. provided energy-efficient natural gas appliances and fuel lines to the home. District employees also helped build the house. Habitat for Humanity uses volunteer labor to keep the construction costs low.

Habitat for Humanity of Sarpy County builds homes for low-income families. The houses are sold to families with a zero-interest mortgage. Habitat charges the family for the actual building costs.

District partners with UNL Extension, Village Pointe to build water conservation garden

by *Lori McGinnis, UNL Extension Service*

A flower-lined path leads visitors into a 3,000 square-foot garden at Village Pointe Mall, 168th & Dodge Sts. Signs identify trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals planted with water conservation in mind.

UNL Extension planted the water conservation demonstration garden to help people learn how to save water in their own gardens. The Village Pointe garden is aesthetically pleasing yet low maintenance, said **John Fech**, extension educator.

The garden is on the southeast side of the mall and contains a mix of trees, perennials, evergreens, ornamental grasses and annual flowers. Plants were selected for drought tolerance and need watering only every three to four weeks, Fech said.

Signs posted in the garden explain what plants were used and how to conserve water when developing a conservation garden. Volunteers in the extension's Master Gardener program are at the garden during certain times to answer questions from the public.

"We're educating people about proper sustainability gardening techniques so they don't just go to a big box store, buy plants on impulse and stick them in the ground," Fech said. "That leads to a wasting of water and fertilizer. It's bad horticulture."

The UNL Extension partnered with Village Pointe, which donated a grassy patch on its property for the garden, and M.U.D., which donated money for plants and equipment needed to develop the garden.

Only Tap Water DeliversSM

public health • fire protection
support for economy • quality of life

Wise use of energy

The District passes the cost of natural gas from the supplier directly to you, as required by law. The cost of natural gas from suppliers varies from day to day because it is an unregulated commodity. Factors include:

- **Weather** — how cold temperatures are in the U.S.;
- **Storage** — how much gas utilities have in storage, and
- **Demand** — how much gas is used by residential and commercial customers across the U.S.

One way to avoid winter heating surprises is to join the District's budget plan (call **554.6666**), which allows you to pay the same bill amount every month. You may join the plan any time of the year. You also can conserve energy by:

1. Having your heating system and chimney inspected every year. Properly-operating appliances lower utility bills and help prevent carbon monoxide from escaping into your home.
2. Setting your thermostat at 65 degrees in winter. You can lower it another five degrees or so at bedtime, or when you'll be away for any length of time. (*Note: Older adults may want to raise the thermostat to prevent hypothermia.*)
3. Cleaning or replacing furnace filters once a month or as needed.
4. Replacing an older furnace with a high-efficiency natural gas model. It can lower heating costs 30 percent or more.
5. Keeping the fireplace damper closed unless a fire is going. An open damper is like having a 48-inch window wide open during the winter; it allows warm air to go right up the chimney.
6. Checking ducts for air leaks. Look for sections that should be joined but have separated, and look for obvious holes. If you use duct tape to repair and seal your ducts, look for tape with the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) logo to avoid tape that degrades, cracks and loses its bond with age.
7. Cleaning warm-air registers. Make sure they are not blocked by furniture, carpeting or drapes.
8. Keeping drapes and shades on south-facing windows open during the day to allow sunlight to enter your home. Close them at night.
9. Using kitchen, bath and other ventilating fans wisely. In just one hour, these fans can pull out a houseful of warmed air. Turn fans off as soon as they have done the job.

Insulation

The easiest and most cost-effective way to insulate your home is to add insulation in the attic. Measure the thickness of the insulation. If there is less than R-22 (7 inches of fiber glass or rock wool or 6 inches of cellulose) you will benefit by adding more. The recommended R-value for attics in our area is R-49.

Also check the insulation in ceilings, exterior and basement walls, floor and crawl spaces. Insulation is measured in R-values. The higher the R-value, the better your walls and roof will resist the transfer of heat. The recommended R-values for our area are:

Attic	R-49
Cathedral ceiling	R-38
Floor	R-25
Crawl space*	R-19
Wall	R-18
Interior basement	R-11
Exterior basement	R-10
Slab edge	R-8

***Insulate crawl space walls only if the crawl space is dry all year, the floor above is not insulated, and all ventilation to the crawl space is blocked. A vapor retarder (e.g., 4- or 6-mil polyethylene film) should be installed on the ground to reduce moisture migration into the crawl space.**

Insulation comes in four types — batts, rolls, loose-fill and rigid foam boards. Each type is made for a different part of your house.

1. Batts (made of fiber glass or rock wool): Fit between studs in the walls or between the joists of the ceiling or floors.

How does air escape?

Air infiltrates in and out of your home through every hole, nook and cranny. About one-third of this air infiltrates through the openings in your ceilings, walls and floors.

Floors, walls, ceilings	31%
Ducts	15%
Fireplace	14%
Plumbing	13%
Doors	11%
Windows	10%
Fans and vents	4%
Electric outlets	2%

2. Rolls or blankets (fiber glass): Lay over the floor in the attic.
3. Loose-fill (fiber glass, rock wool or cellulose): Blown into the attic or walls.
4. Rigid foam board (polyisocyanurate, polystyrene): Use in confined spaces such as exterior walls, basements, foundation and crawl space walls, concrete slabs and cathedral ceilings.

Insulating ducts in the basement will make the basement colder. If both the ducts and the basement walls are uninsulated, consider insulating both.

If your basement has been converted to a living area, install both supply and return registers in the basement rooms.

Weatherization

You can save 10 percent or more on your energy bill by reducing the air leaks in your home.

Test your home for air tightness. On a windy day, hold a lit incense stick next to your windows, doors, electrical boxes, plumbing fixtures, electrical outlets, ceiling fixtures, attic hatches and other locations where there is a possible air path to the outside.

If the smoke travels horizontally, you have located an air leak that may need caulking, sealing or weather-stripping.

- Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows that leak air.
- Caulk and seal leaks where plumbing, ducting or electrical wiring penetrates through exterior walls, floors, ceilings and soffits over cabinets.
- Install rubber gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on exterior walls.
- Look for dirty spots in your insulation, which often indicates air leaks into and out of your house. Seal the holes by stapling sheets of plastic over the holes and caulking the edges of the plastic.
- Install storm windows over single-pane windows or replace them with double-pane windows. Storm windows as much as double the R-value of single-pane windows and they help reduce drafts, water condensation and frost formation.

As a less costly and less permanent alternative, you can use a heavy-duty, clear plastic sheet on a frame or tape clear plastic film to the inside of the window frames. The plastic must be sealed tightly to the frame to help reduce infiltration.

How much will I save if I lower the temperature?

If the normal temperature setting on your thermostat is 70 degrees and you lower it to 68 degrees, your gas bill will decrease 6 percent per month during the heating season.

If the normal temperature setting on your thermostat is 70 degrees and you lower it to 67 degrees, your gas bill will decrease 9 percent per month during the heating season.

If the normal temperature setting on your thermostat is 70 degrees and you lower it to 66 degrees, your gas bill will decrease 13 percent per month during the heating season.

Weatherization program

Owners and tenants, who meet income guidelines, may sign up for a free inspection of their home to identify the most effective energy improvements.

The program also will repair or replace faulty or non-working heating systems. Homes are disqualified if they have leaky roofs, structural damage, pest infestation or are a health or safety risk.

If a household member receives Supplemental Security income, Aid to Dependent Children or Energy Assistance payments from Nebraska Health and Human Services, the household automatically qualifies for the project, regardless of income.

For more information, call the Douglas County Weatherization Trust Inc., **342.1611**. If you live in Sarpy County, call **862.2411**.

Energy conservation information in this newsletter is from the U.S.

Department of Energy booklet, "Energy Savers: Tips for Saving Energy and Money at Home."

Call us at 554.6666 for a free copy. The booklet also is available on the web (www1.erec.energy.gov/consumer/tips).

Before you replace your heating system, think about...

- **Comfort level:** Conventional gas furnaces provide air from your registers at a range of 110 to 130 degrees. A standard electric heat pump provides air from registers in the range of 85 to 95 degrees.
- **Two heating systems:** A gas furnace will supply all your heating needs. An electric heat pump requires a back-up heating system.
- **Installation costs:** When installed by a qualified contractor, a heat pump on the average will cost \$1,000 more than a standard air conditioning unit.
- **Other:** Gas furnaces do not lose efficiency as outdoor air temperatures drop. Higher volumes of air typically are required with heat pumps. Existing duct systems are not designed to provide the higher air volumes.

If you're thinking about replacing your home's heating system, call us at 504.7023. We'll be happy to answer your questions and give you a gas and electric cost comparison.

24/7 iCAN account information

Need to know your last meter reading, due date of bill or amount owed? Call us any time of the day or night at 504.7025 to access your account information.

- You will need the first six digits of your account number found in the upper left-hand corner of your bill.
- You also will need the last four digits of the account holder's social security number, or for commercial accounts, the employer identification number (EIN).

For more information about 24/7 account information, go to our website, www.mudomaha.com/service/ican.html.

Looking for a speaker?

The M.U.D. Speakers Bureau offers entertaining and informative programs on water and natural gas issues, including Sniffasaurus or "Sniffy," our lovable dinosaur (live character). Sniffy teaches the importance of natural gas safety, and is perfect for fairs, exhibitions, class visits. (K-5th grade). *Visits to preschools and day care centers are not available.*

We also offer videos, traveling demonstrations and water plant tours to illustrate the importance of natural gas and water and the safe use of these resources.

All programs are presented at no charge. Reserve a program via our website (www.mudomaha.com) or

Call 504.7010

Having difficulty paying a bill?

If you're finding it difficult to keep up with your utility bill, please call us. We will work with you to set up a payment that works for you and M.U.D. **Call 504.7002.**

Did you know?

Several NFL teams, including the Green Bay Packers, New England Patriots, Philadelphia Eagles and Washington Redskins, warm their playing fields using tubes heated with natural gas.

It keeps the turf warm enough to let the grass grow during the winter.

Bill payment

To pay your bill on time and avoid a late fee, please allow two to three business days for the payment to arrive at the M.U.D. office if you pay your bill by mail, at OPPD, Hy-Vee, a bank or other business.

Thank you.

Gas, Water Emergencies
554.7777

Customer Service
(7:30 a.m. - 5:15 p.m.)
554.6666



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