



54091 US Hwy 2 W., Glasgow
P.O. Box 951, Glasgow, MT 59230
406-228-9351

[facebook.com/norvalelectric](https://www.facebook.com/norvalelectric)
www.norval.coop

NorVal Electric Cooperative Directors

District 1 Kevin Nelson 724-3202
District 2 Sam Gundermann 724-3405
District 3 Rick Molvig **Vice Pres.** 367-5328
District 4 Chris Christensen 364-2367
District 5 Kurt Breigenzer **S/T** 228-9465
District 6 Ron Reddig **President** 392-5257
District 7 Rocky Kittleson 367-5366
District 7 Gary Meyer 526-3600

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Are Portable Space Heaters Efficient for My Home?

Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. Unfortunately, many people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home, which can really take a toll on their energy bills. The truth is, whether you should use space heaters really depends on your home's efficiency and energy needs.

If you are using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home. If you are on a tight budget, caulking and weather stripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy. Depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Loose fill insulation typically costs \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot. Taking these proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

Perhaps your home is energy efficient but you are cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans; we use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter months. Only use a space heater in small spaces that you are occupying and, if possible, try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the space heater. If you decide to use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, make sure the heater is properly sized for the space. Most heaters include a general sizing table.

A word about safety: the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 deaths. If you must use a space heater, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and

make sure it carries the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating and place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Consider alternative ways to stay warm like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, lay down area rugs to provide additional insulation (and appeal!) and maintain warmth.

We know it's cold out there, but remember in addition to safety concerns, space heaters can greatly increase your energy bills if used improperly.

If you are looking for alternative ways to save energy and increase comfort in your home, contact NorVal Electric at 406.228.9351. We are here to help you manage your energy use.

TIPS TO DITCH THE SPACE HEATER

Space heaters are energy hogs, and old models can be extremely dangerous. This winter, ditch the space heater and try these alternative solutions to stay cozy.

- Use an electric blanket to keep warm during the night.
- Caulk and weatherstrip around all windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- Consider adding insulation to your attic and around duct work.



Welcome to NorVal!

We are beyond excited to announce the recent hire of Joe Brent to the position of Staking Engineer. Joe comes to Glasgow from Billings where he worked in the Electric Utility for the past 9 years. He enjoys spending time at his cabin on Fort Peck Lake, traveling and spending time with family and friends. Joe is looking forward to meeting NorVal's members, community and becoming familiar with NorVal's electric system. Welcome to the co-op family, Joe! 

Nick's Notes

By Nick Dulaney
Line Superintendent

Happy New Year! I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season.

As we kick off 2022, our crews are focusing on annual line patrols and potential line retirements on idle services. Winter weather gives us an opportunity to perform preventative maintenance on our vehicles and equipment as needed. In January, we will conduct our annual material inventory. Later in the year, we plan to upgrade meters in the Lustre, Volt and Wolf Point areas once the materials become available.

Here's hoping 2022 will be a wonderful year for all of our members. As always, if you have any questions or need anything, please give our office a call or stop in. 📞

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Maximize your heating system's performance by inspecting, cleaning or replacing air filters once a month or as needed to reduce energy costs and prevent potential damage to your system.

Make sure radiators, baseboard heaters and warm-air registers aren't blocked so air can flow freely.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Working with Local Legislators

"All politics is local." This observation by the late Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, Jr., former Speaker of the House of Representatives, means that even national politics have a local impact, and people care most about issues that directly affect them. Indirectly, this famous adage underscores the importance and value of local politics.

At NorVal Electric, we think it is critical to develop and cultivate relationships with local legislators because they craft, introduce and vote on legislation that impacts the local business climate, the environment and quality of life for our community. That's why we work closely with our local elected officials. After all, our purpose is to provide safe, reliable, affordable energy, but our mission is to help our community thrive.

NorVal Electric is a local business that powers economic development and prosperity for our region. As a cooperative, we have deep roots here and we listen closely to our members to better understand the needs of the community. Our leadership, board members and employees live and work right here in the community we serve.

We strive to be an advocate for our community, ensuring that local legislators know, understand and act on the issues that are important to our area.

Providing industry guidance and expertise

As a practical matter, we recognize that most legislators are "generalists," yet they vote on a wide range of issues. Their expertise may not include the changing energy industry, which is why NorVal Electric provides guidance and expertise from subject matter experts who have been in the energy industry for many years.

Today's energy landscape is an increasingly complex topic covering not only the traditional engineering and vegetation

management aspects of the industry, but also encompasses technology, cybersecurity, the electrification of the transportation sector and more.

Our experts provide briefings and backgrounders to legislators, committees and staff. We offer expert testimony for hearings and other legislative or regulatory meetings or gatherings. Since we are involved in economic development and we know local community leaders, we can provide insight on how issues and policies under discussion might impact our region.

In addition, we periodically invite legislators and their staff to the co-op for tours so they can see first-hand how we operate and can view our operations center, substations, etc.

Representing your best interests

We strive to be a trusted resource on energy issues. With our deep roots in the community, we have a firm understanding of local issues and needs. We will continue looking after the long-term interests of our consumer-members. This means we are able to cultivate and foster positive, productive relationships with legislators who know and trust us because we are advocating on behalf of the community we serve.

We are proud to power your life and bring good things to the community. We hope you will continue to advise NorVal Electric on matters of importance so we can continue to advocate on your behalf and improve the quality of life for all. 📞

Don't Skip Your Annual Physical!

A new year means new opportunities to focus on your overall health and well-being and a good first step to realizing your health goals is to make an appointment for your annual physical. Make the choice to prioritize your health this year. Call your primary care physician and make an appointment today. 📞

Why Are Physicals Important?

Regular physicals create a health baseline and can help prevent serious illness. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure! Annual physicals help create a health baseline, which your physician can use to detect and prevent serious illness or disease.

Face-to-face visits help you connect with your primary care provider. According to Duke Health, your annual physical is your opportunity to establish trust, share concerns and health care preferences before serious illness strikes.

Regular visits now can help you prepare for the future. Your annual physical is an opportunity to discuss personal and family history,

which helps your care provider recommend actions that can prevent disease. It is also the opportunity to discuss health changes and conditions you should keep an eye on, diagnostic screenings you should consider and diet and exercise adjustments you could make to keep you healthy now and into the future.

How often should you get a physical?

Advice varies, but according to the Cleveland Clinic, healthy individuals in their 20s and 30s should see their primary care physician at least every two years. If you are 40 and over, you should be seeing your primary care physician annually.

How Should You Prepare For Your Physical?

- **Make sure to write down any questions you have. You don't want to forget something important during the exam!**
- **Arm yourself with knowledge. Make sure you learn and understand your personal medical history and your family medical history. Make sure you come prepared with a list of all medications you are taking.**
- **Bring additional health data. This can be a food log, data from a fitness tracker or personal blood pressure charting.**