The Nodak Neighbor

September/October 2011
Official Publication of Nodak Electric Cooperative
www.nodakelectric.com

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Miles of tile

Wet conditions set off drain tile boom in the Valley

Farmers in the Red River Valley are prepping for what may be a long battle against flooding and extreme wet conditions.

Agassiz Drain Tile aims to give them an edge.

The company is the region's newest subsurface drainage tile business. Operating off of Interstate-29 near Buxton, N.D., co-owners Ross Johnson and Derek Peterson say business has been booming following consecutive flood years.

"The main factor is that farmers want to improve their yields," Johnson said. "By installing drain tile, they can get into the field sooner, combine sooner and they don't get stuck anymore. The whole field is nice and mellow when they work it."

Drain tile helps remove water from the field through a series of narrow-spaced lateral plastic pipes buried 2.5 to 3 feet underground that feed into a main. Though field surface drainage is common, going below ground is a relatively new approach in the area.

But Johnson says it's more than simply moving water. By controlling the field's water table, drain tile promotes deeper root growth, better soil quality and more efficient use of fertilizer.

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Official Publication of the Nodak Electric Cooperative, Inc.

746-4461 or 800-732-4373

www.nodakelectric.com

The Nodak Neighbor (USPS 391-200) is published seven times a year, Feb., March, April, June, August, Oct. and Dec. for $1.00 per year by the Nodak Electric Cooperative, Inc., 4000 32nd Ave. S., Grand Forks, N.D. 58201-5944. Periodicals postage paid at Grand Forks, N.D., and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NODAK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC., P.O. Box 13000, Grand Forks, N.D. 58208-3000.

Volume 61, No. 6
September-October 2011

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On the cover

Drain tile installation is gaining traction among farmers in the Red River Valley. Agassiz Drain Tile and Advanced Drainage Systems, neighboring businesses in Buxton, N.D., respectively install and manufacture the plastic piping.

Hoeven holds town hall meeting

Sen. John Hoeven (right) visits with Mac McLennan, president & CEO of Minnkota Power Cooperative, about energy-related issues.

Sen. John Hoeven held a town hall meeting at Nodak Electric in Grand Forks to emphasize economic pro-growth legislation he's pushing in Washington and to gather views from constituents on a range of issues.

Hoeven provided an overview of his work in Congress to promote pro-business legislation, create jobs and grow the nation's economy. He discussed the need for a comprehensive federal energy policy, something that has been missing in our country for many years. With a new federal energy policy in place, he stated that millions of new jobs would be created and consumer energy costs would be stabilized. He then opened the floor for questions, insights and opinions from constituents. Among the discussions was the effect the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plan for Regional Haze would have on Minnkota Power Cooperative and Nodak Electric members.

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDH), as the permitting authority, is charged with implementing a Regional Haze reduction plan, but the EPA has filed a formal objection to the state's design, and has prescribed a far more expensive and unproven protocol for reducing the nitrogen oxides emissions at Minnkota Power's Milton R. Young Station near Center, N.D.

"State regulators have made every effort to work not only with the EPA, but also local stakeholders to arrive at a reasonable, affordable and effective plan, but federal regulators are delaying its implementation in favor of a costlier, untested method of questionable effectiveness, purportedly for administrative consistency. That makes no sense," Hoeven said.

After years of preparation, the NDDH offered a detailed plan to reduce Regional Haze in March 2010. The EPA rejected the state's plan to retrofit the Young Station. In its rejected plan to reduce Regional Haze, the state proposed a non-catalytic method for its lignite coal-fueled plants that is proven to reduce nitrogen oxides more than 60 percent. However, the EPA has proposed a catalytic technology that has not been used with North Dakota lignite coal, which burns differently than other coals because of its high sodium content and high burn temperature. Additionally, this technology would add a significantly greater cost burden to North Dakota coal plants and consumers for an uncertain result.

NORTH DAKOTA

UTILITY REBATE PROGRAM

Get your rebates in now!

Does your heating system need replacing? Do you want to add insulation? Rebate money is still available through the North Dakota Utility Rebate Program. Rebates are available on ENERGY STAR-qualified heating, ventilation, air conditioners, water heaters, insulation, lighting, air-source heat pumps, geothermal heat pumps, renewables and more.

The program runs until Dec. 31, 2011, or until the funds run out – whichever comes first.

Check out the link on our website to check on funds available and download the application.

My 37-year career comes to a close

George Berg
President & CEO

Thirty-seven years ago this month, I walked into Nodak's headquarters office to inquire about a job posted in the *Grand Forks Herald*. I was about two years out of college, and I knew just enough about Nodak to guess it would be a good place to get a permanent job.

I grew up on a farm near Edinburg and I knew Nodak provided our electricity, but until then I didn't know the main office was in Grand Forks. The office at that time was pretty well-hidden in a mostly residential area west of Washington Street and north of the railroad tracks.

Earlier this year, I informed your board of directors of my intent to retire as of the end of the year 2011.

Unfortunately, the job advertised was seasonal, but I did learn about a full-time position, which was soon to be announced. I applied for the full-time position and was hired two weeks later.

Earlier this year, I informed your board of directors of my intent to retire as of the end of the year 2011. They are now in the process of taking applications for a new president & CEO. A letter from the board of directors, along with the announcement, has been posted on our website at **www.nodakelectric.com** under the menu item "About Nodak."

I have been fortunate to work at and manage Nodak during some exciting times. When I was hired in 1974, underground distribution lines were a relatively new option. Nodak was aggressively replacing hundreds of miles of World War II vintage overhead lines each year with underground rural distribution (URD) cable.

Also during the mid-1970s, Minnkota Power Cooperative and the 12 distribution cooperatives introduced the concept of "off-peak" heat as a strategy to build new load without creating the need for more generation. This strategy would ultimately blossom into a program which would heat tens of thousands of houses and businesses in the Minnkota system with a low-cost alternative.

I began my employment at Nodak at a time when mainframe computers and data processing were changing the way all business functions were handled. Nodak had recently purchased a mainframe computer from IBM, and most employees were learning new ways to manage data and perform their day-to-day duties.

Any one of the above changes by themselves would be enough to create some chaos in an organization. Combined, they meant fewer dull moments, and it was not a fun environment for anyone resistant to change. It was a great environment and a great time to be a new employee.

I hope new employees coming into our organization today will look back upon retirement and feel grateful they were part of meaningful change. Maybe their experiences will be related to high-tech solutions and the development of what is now referred to as a "smart grid." The ultimate vision is that you, as a customer, will not need to think and worry about being energy efficient on a day-to-day basis. Instead, you will buy and install appliances that can "talk to" an electrical grid, which will instantaneously price electricity based on various economic factors.

We all have to admit that kind of change sounds exciting. Hopefully, it will happen because it will be a good way to save money and not only because of the rapidly increasing cost of electricity.

I have never regretted my stop at the Nodak office in September of 1974. I have had the privilege to work with and for many dedicated board members elected by you to govern the cooperative. I worked alongside basically hardworking, conscientious employees who, like me, have felt fortunate to be employed by an organization like Nodak. I always have and always will be proud to tell people I have been associated with this organization.

Good luck to the next fortunate person chosen by your board of directors to be president & CEO of Nodak.

Please update your address information

We are updating our files for outage and billing purposes. If your address information has changed, please fill out the change of address form located on the bottom of your billing statement and return with your payment. Thank you.

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Miles of tile

(continued from page 1)

Increased land prices in the region have also made the investment in drain tile more popular. Johnson says the payback ranges from three to seven years, but the recent wet cycle has accelerated that time frame in some cases.

The idea to start the business began when Johnson and his family had drain tile installed in the wetter portions of their fields. Soon enough, he and Peterson were on a mission. The duo traveled to Ohio, Illinois, Michigan and Iowa

in 2004 to learn the latest drain tile techniques. A year later, Agassiz Drain Tile was in business.

"We had one plow going a little over a year ago," Peterson said. "Now we have three plows and four crews."

Right next door

Behind the newly found demand for drain tile, Johnson and his father elected to buy a building off of I-29 to house the business last fall. It didn't take long to get a new neighbor.

Advanced Drainage Systems (ADS), a world-renowned name in drain tile manufacturing, started a new production plant next door to Agassiz Drain Tile in mid-March. Nodak Electric Cooperative provides power for both businesses in the facility.

"The Buxton plant was added in order to do one thing – satisfy customer demand and supply the growing need for ADS products in these areas," said Joe Chlapaty, ADS Chairman and CEO. "I fully expect to continue expanding our production capabilities with new equipment and new plants in all geographic areas, and increase our product offerings across all our markets."

So far, demand for ADS products has been so high that the Buxton facility runs 24 hours a day – and there's rarely a day off. ADS also operates 44 plants throughout the United States and nine internationally. It made sense to start a production line in the Red River Valley instead of shipping the hollow tubing from the closest plants in southern Minnesota.

"We will continue to invest significant dollars in our facilities to meet the growing demand for our products," Chlapaty said. "Increasing our Midwest capacity will enhance our ability to provide customers with the water management products they rely on to increase crop yields, which is critically important to help alleviate the worldwide shortage of grains."

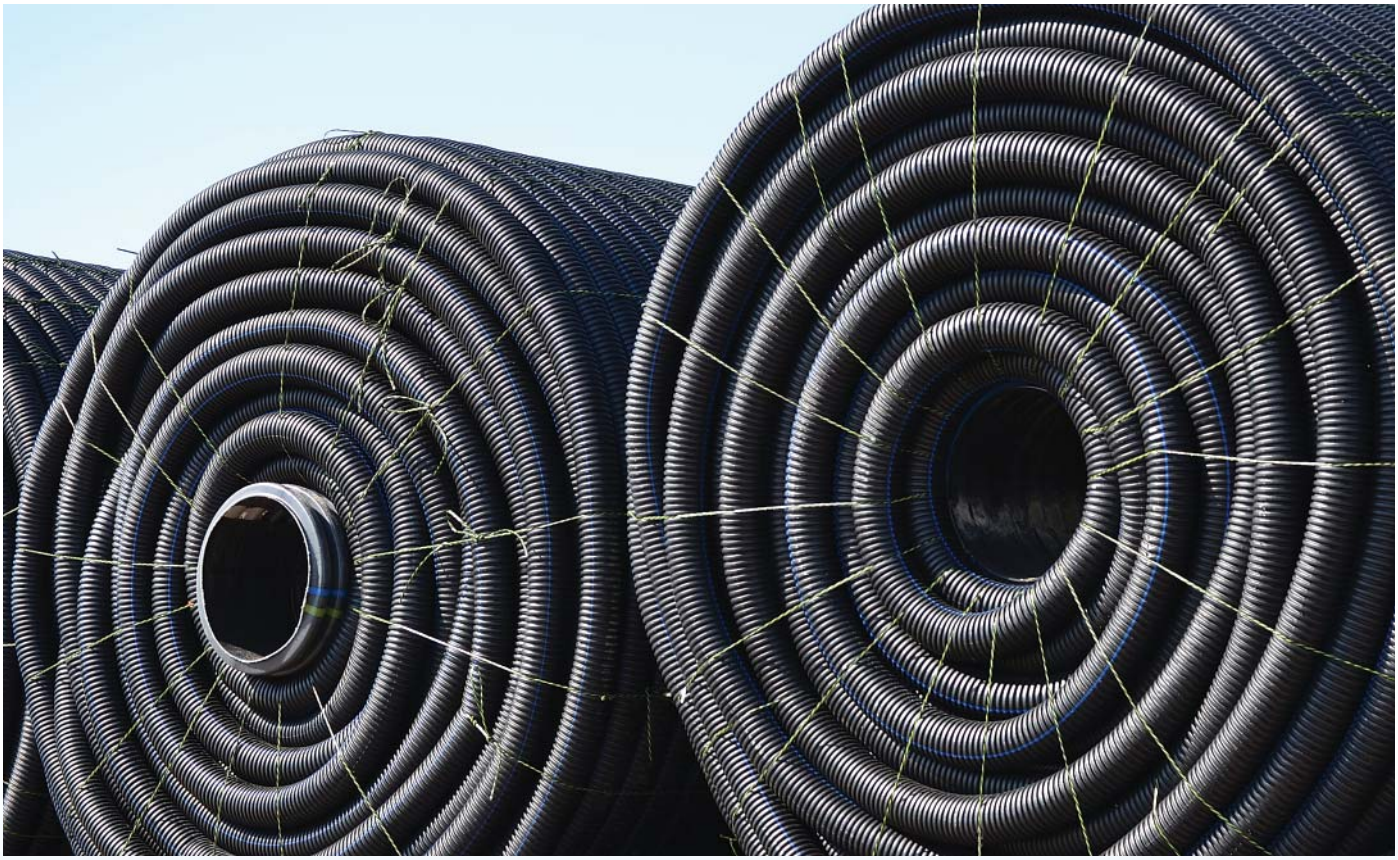
In the field

Agassiz Drain Tile buys all of its tile from ADS, though there is no direct link between the two companies. ADS also sells to other installers in the extended area.

With rolls of drain tile at its immediate disposal, Agassiz Drain Tile is out in the fields faster than ever.

The company uses topographic mapping to survey and custom design each system. The design is then transferred to the plow, which is set up with real-time kinematics GPS technology. The GPS system not only guides the plow, but also controls how the power feeder installs the

Real-time GPS guides the plow and controls the installation of the drain tile. The lateral piping is spaced narrowly by Agassiz Drain Tile and placed on a grade so that it flows into a main drainage pipe.



Advanced Drainage Systems opened a new production facility in Buxton, N.D., this year. The company manufactures drain tile and ships it throughout the Red River Valley and beyond.

pipe. The system locks onto a grade that ensures the lateral lines are flowing down into the main.

If there isn't a natural drain at the end of the main, farmers will need to install a pump. That's where Nodak comes in. Each summer, line crews trench power line, set up a transformer and meter, and get power to the pump.

"Nodak plays a huge role," Johnson said. "Getting power out there is important if there isn't a way for the field to drain naturally."

Agassiz Drain Tile has 17 employees. More than 20 million feet of tile has been installed since the company started in 2005. Although that seems like a big number, Peterson estimates that only a small percentage of farmland in the Valley is tiled. But the number is growing thanks to good word of mouth.

"We feel like we've done a lot, but there's still room to grow," Peterson said. "There's still a lot of work left to do."

Keep utility poles safe for our linemen

Little things you can do to help keep them safe

Utility poles safely support the electric power conductors (wires) that provide vital electric service to our members. They are the backbone of our distribution system. Working on power lines can be a dangerous job. In order to ensure reliable service, linemen sometimes have to climb poles in all kinds of weather, day and night.

During this hunting season, Nodak reminds avid hunters that it is prohibited to attach a deer stand to its utility poles. It is also illegal to attach any type of sign to an electric utility pole (such as campaign signs, garage sales, properties for sale, lost and found pets, directions, etc.) or attach electric fences. Signs on utility poles raise major safety concerns for Nodak's linemen. If any signs are found on poles, they will be removed. Staples, tacks and nails can cause more serious injuries than most people would suspect. For example, if a nail tears an insulated glove, the lineman is no longer properly protected from the high-voltage power lines he works on. Also, nails and staples can cause the linemen's boot spikes to cut out of the pole, causing a serious fall from a dangerous height. And, a rusty nail in the hand will require a visit to the hospital for a tetanus shot.

Also keep in mind – please do not use electrical equipment installed on the pole for target practice. This will do nothing but damage equipment and cause outages. Shooting at power lines or insulators on the poles could cause the lines to come down. Furthermore, sports equipment, private lighting or any other device for personal use should not be installed on utility poles.

We ask our members to follow these simple guidelines to help keep our linemen safe and make the already dangerous job of the lineman much safer.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® **Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

1. Publication Title	2. Publication Number	3. Filing Date
The Nodak Neighbor	3 9 1 2 - 0 0 0 0	7/11/11
4. Issue Frequency	5. Number of Issues Published Annually	6. Annual Subscription Price
Seven Times Per Year	Seven	$1.00

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®): 4000 32nd Avenue South, PO Box 13000, Grand Forks, ND 58208-3000 — Contact Person: Duane Hafner — Telephone (Include area code): 701-746-4461

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer): 4000 32nd Avenue South, PO Box 13000, Grand Forks, ND 58208-3000

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank)

Publisher (Name and complete mailing address): Nodak Electric Cooperative, Inc., 4000 32nd Avenue South, Grand Forks, ND 58208-3000

Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Duane Hafner - Customer/Energy Services Manager, Nodak Electric Cooperative, Inc., 4000 32nd Avenue South, PO Box 13000, Grand Forks, ND 58208-3000

Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Duane Hafner - Customer/Energy Services Manager, Nodak Electric Cooperative, Inc., 4000 32nd Avenue South, PO Box 13000, Grand Forks, ND 58208-3000

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
Nodak Electric Cooperative, Inc.	4000 32nd Avenue South, PO Box 13000 Grand Forks, ND 58208-3000

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box → ☒ None

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:
☐ Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

PS Form 3526, September 2007 (Page 1 of 3 (Instructions Page 3)) PSN 7530-01-000-9931 PRIVACY NOTICE: See our privacy policy on www.usps.com

13. Publication Title	14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below
The Nodak Neighbor	July/August 2011

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
Newsletter			
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)		13,462	13,449
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541(Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	13,337	13,324
	(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)		
	(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®		
	(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail®)		
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))		13,337	13,324
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541		
	(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541		
	(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail)		
	(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	75	75
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))		75	75
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)		13,412	13,399
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))		50	50
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)		13,462	13,449
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)		99	99

16. Publication of Statement of Ownership
☐ If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the Sept/Oct 2011 issue of this publication. ☒ Publication not required.

17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Duane Hafner, Customer/Energy Services Manager — Date: 7/12/11

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Energy efficient lighting

Lighting is a major energy consumer. Energy savings are possible using energy efficient equipment. Using less lighting reduces heat gain, thus saving air conditioning energy and improving thermal comfort. There are two main ways to save energy used for lighting: use more energy efficient lighting, and reduce the operating time of the lighting.

Many facilities may already use fluorescent lighting in their high traffic areas, such as the office, but not all fluorescent lamps are energy efficient and cost-effective. There are several types of fluorescent lamps that vary depending on the duration of their lamp life, energy efficiency, regulated power and the quality of color it transmits. There are a few styles worth noting; these models are simply labeled as "T-12," "T-8," or "T-5." The names come from the size of their diameter per eighth inch. For example, a T-12 lamp is 12/8 inch in diameter (or 1½ inch); a T-8 lamp is 8/8 inch in diameter (or 1 inch); a T-5 lamp is 5/8 inch in diameter. This is a simple way to identify the type of fluorescent lamps a facility is using.

The recommended style of fluorescent lighting is a T-8. T-8 lights are the most cost-effective as they are 30 to 40 percent more efficient than standard T-12 fluorescent lamps, which have poor color rendition and cause eye strain. T-8 lamps provide more illumination, better color and don't flicker (often exhibited by standard fluorescent fixtures). T-5 lamps are the most energy efficient and also tend to transmit the best color; however, they usually cost more. Manufacturer recommendations suggest that users replace the bulbs every six to 12 months due to a slow decrease in brightness, but the difference is not usually noticeable to the naked eye. Bulbs running 10 hours a day can last up to two years before showing noticeable signs that they're in need of replacement.

All fluorescent lamps need ballasts to maintain the current passing through the lamp at a certain value. Ballasts are the parts of a light fixture that hold and power the fluorescent light bulbs. Some ballasts are magnetic, where as others are electronic. Electronic high-frequency ballasts are now standard for most fluorescent lights. Electronic ballasts are more efficient at providing energy-efficient power to the bulbs and have advantages over older magnetic ballasts. Although electronic ballasts are more expensive, they have higher energy efficiency and can save money in the long run. Electronic ballasts can hold multiple bulbs and use less energy to power those bulbs and they generate less heat during operation, therefore helping reduce energy used for air conditioning. They work best with T-8 bulbs for maximum energy saving. Part of their effectiveness is due to being better able to convert incoming electricity to the proper amount needed to power the bulbs, leading to less wasted energy. Due to the differences in wattage between the types of lights, if converting from a T-12 to a T-8 light, one must also change the type of ballast being used.

Sources: ***www.energystar.gov, www.eere.energy.gov***

commitment to Community

Nodak and its employees participated in the United Way Campaign for 2011. This year Nodak was picked to run its campaign early as a Pacesetter. This is one of the ways Nodak contributes to the community.

Nodak ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Pre-winter checklist

Homeowners should look ahead to winter months.
Good planning can help to reduce maintenance and utility costs.

Central heating

- ✔ Make sure all air vents are free from obstructions.
- ✔ Adjust your vents by opening those near the floor and closing those near the ceiling for better air circulation during the winter months.
- ✔ Test your furnace before the weather gets cold, and consider having your heating system checked by a professional.
- ✔ Replace or clean your furnace air filters.
- ✔ Window or through-wall air conditioners should have a cover over the unit or remove it for the winter and seal the opening.

Insulation

- ✔ Check your attic for proper insulation. (The U.S. Department of Energy suggests a value between R-22 and R-49.)
- ✔ Be sure attic insulation does not cover ventilation vent in the eaves (also called soffits or overhangs). This will help prevent winter ice dams.
- ✔ Make sure crawl space is insulated.
- ✔ Consider insulating your basement walls. Besides saving you heating dollars, it can reduce common moisture problems caused by condensation.
- ✔ If at all possible, make sure walls are insulated to R-11.
- ✔ Insulate pipes and heating ducts that run through cold, unheated crawl spaces or attics.

Safety

- ✔ Make sure all smoke detectors are working with fresh batteries.
- ✔ Install carbon monoxide alarms near the furnace and any fireplaces.
- ✔ Check that fire extinguishers have been tested.