



Shane Colman has had a roundabout career path from engineering to forestry and now back to engineering.

After high school he enrolled at Montana Tech in Butte to study engineering and also play basketball. Shortly into his time at Tech, Shane's brother was in a critical accident. He made the decision to move closer to home to help his family.

Still wanting to pursue a college degree, he enrolled in the forestry program at the University of Montana. This sparked a 10-year career in wildland firefighting while obtaining a forestry degree along the way.

When Shane decided it was time to put firefighting aside, he re-enrolled at Montana Tech to complete the engineering degree. After graduating in 2011, he moved to Phoenix, Arizona, where he eventually ended up working for Southwest Gas. This is where he met his wife, who oddly enough, was also from Montana.

As their family grew, they both knew they wanted to be closer to family. In 2016, Shane accepted a job as the Gas Operations Supervisor for NorthWestern Energy.

Now, seven years later, Shane's career has come full circle. He recently became NorthWestern's Manager of Wildfire Mitigation.

"It fits my background perfectly," Shane said.

In Shane's new position, he's focused on building NorthWestern's enhanced wildfire mitigation plan.

"We're really trying to bring a lot of situational awareness to help inform us on how to manage our system," Shane said.

Shane's favorite thing about working at NorthWestern Energy is the people he gets to work with.

"It's such a big company, and we have so many good people," he said. "It makes coming to work a lot of fun when you enjoy the people you work with."



Simple Shepherd's Pie

Shane grew up in Ronan, Montana, which is located on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Western Montana. Shane's father is an enrolled tribal member. Growing up, they ate a lot of meat and potatoes – potatoes because they were cheap, and meat because his family hunted wild game. Now, a father of four, Shane still enjoys meat and potatoes, and Shepherd's Pie is one of his favorite dishes.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 can (12 ounces) home-style beef gravy
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 1 cup frozen peas and carrots
- 1 teaspoon dried minced onion
- 2 to 3 cups mashed potatoes
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- Paprika

DIRECTIONS

- In a Dutch oven, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink, breaking beef into crumbles, 6-8 minutes; drain. Add the gravy, vegetables and onion. Spoon into a greased 2-quart baking dish. Top with mashed potatoes. Drizzle with butter and sprinkle with paprika.
- Bake, uncovered at 350° until heated through, 30-35 minutes.
- Beef mixture can be frozen for up to 3 months. To prepare frozen casserole: Thaw in the refrigerator; transfer to a greased 2-quart baking dish. Top with the potatoes, butter and paprika; bake as directed.

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

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

ပညာတော်အသုံးအဆောင်များကိုကူညီပေးရန်အတွက်ကျေးဇူးတင်ပြောဆိုလိုက်ရပါသည်။ ကျွန်ုပ်တို့၏အဖွဲ့အစည်းများသည် ကျွန်ုပ်တို့၏အဖွဲ့အစည်းများကိုကူညီပေးရန်အတွက်ကျေးဇူးတင်ပြောဆိုလိုက်ရပါသည်။

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LOOK INSIDE FOR INFORMATION ON:

- Wildfire prevention
- Plan where you plant
- How to read your bill
- Rate review update
- Employee feature
- Simple Shepherd's Pie recipe

NorthWestern Energy helps prevent wildfires

With humans causing more than 85% of wildfires, it's more important than ever to help prevent wildfires from starting. At NorthWestern Energy, our Vegetation Management team works year-round to clear any trees and bushes that could contact our power lines, start fires, and cause outages. Our Wildfire Mitigation team, along with emergency response agencies, invests in proactive strategies to protect our system, our customers, and our favorite playground: Montana's forests.

Wildfire Mitigation

NorthWestern Energy has an active wildfire mitigation program that includes hazard tree removal and adding special equipment to our lines to prevent sparks in high-risk areas.

Managing a rural electric system

The majority of our power lines are in rural or sub-rural areas where there are fewer than 24 customers per mile. In the past decade, we have focused on strengthening our electric system, so it's less likely to spark wildfires. We use extensive data sets to determine which stretches of power lines are highest risk, and then install special equipment in those areas, such as spark arresting technology or switches that clear faults quickly.

Hazard Tree Program

One way we prevent wildfires is to remove danger and hazard trees – trees that could contact an electric line when they fall. While we have been working for several years to remove hazard trees, it will take several passes to clear Rights of Way to the levels that remove all risk from falling trees. We are proud of what we have accomplished to date, but it is hard to quantify the fires that have been prevented through these efforts.

Scan this QR code to watch a video about our wildfire mitigation efforts.

<https://youtu.be/6r0paS-JPdS>



Plan where you plant

Where you plant a tree is just as important as the tree you select. Planting a tall tree too close to a power line could result in the tree being regularly trimmed shorter than you would ever want or worse, being removed. Pick the right tree and the right place to avoid collisions with power lines, sidewalks, buildings and other trees.

- 1. Get measurements.** When selecting a new tree or shrub, ask the tree nursery what the height and width will be once it's fully grown.
- 2. Call 811.** Before digging, call 811 or visit Call811.com to have underground utility lines marked for free. Do this at least two business days before you are planning to plant.
- 3. Look up.** If power lines are over the area where you want to plant, plan to plant roughly 20 feet away based on the mature size of your tree.
- 4. Look down.** To be safe, plan to plant at least 25 feet away from the flags that indicate underground natural gas lines.
- 5. Look around.** If there are any ground-level transformers nearby, plan to plant at least 10 feet away from the front to ensure the transformer is accessible.

TREE TIP: If your tree's mature height is 20 feet – plant 20 feet away from any nearby power lines.

Learn more and find additional tree planting tips at NorthWesternEnergy.com/trees.

How to read your bill

When we get our energy bill every month, many of us only look at the amount due. However, your NorthWestern Energy bill contains much more information, and the more you know about your energy use, the better you'll be able to manage it.

Here are a few things to notice on your bill:

- The 13-month graph allows you to see how your energy use this billing cycle compares to recent months and to the same month one year ago.
- Look at the information under the graph to compare days of service, as this can fluctuate between cycles and can sometimes explain why a bill is higher or lower than normal.
- You can also compare average daily temperatures, listed below the bar graph. These can also help explain fluctuations in your bill.
- Delivery charges vs. supply service –
 - Energy delivery charges can be thought of as the cost to use the highways (pipes and wires) that deliver the energy from the generation source to the user. These charges are subject to regulation by the State Utility Commissions and, where appropriate, the Federal Regulatory Commission.
 - Supply service is the charge for the amount of electricity or natural gas you use. The supply may come from a variety of sources, some owned by NorthWestern Energy and others owned by third-party suppliers. This is a pass through cost, meaning whatever we pay for the energy is what our customers pay.
- Read the information in the Message Board area of the bill. It includes important information about rates and updates.

We also have a page on our website dedicated to explaining every item on your bill, everything from where to find your account number to how we calculate therms.

For more information, visit NorthWesternEnergy.com/ReadYourBill.

Montana regulatory rate review update

NorthWestern Energy's regulatory rate review hearing before the Montana Public Service Commission, which regulates investor-owned energy companies in Montana, took place in April.

In August 2022, NorthWestern Energy filed an application with the Montana Public Service Commission for a regulatory rate review of electric and natural gas services. NorthWestern Energy and multiple parties reached a settlement agreement on April 3.

If the Montana Public Service Commission approves the settlement proposal, the typical electric residential customer using 750 kWh per month is expected to see an increase to their bill of \$8.24, or 7.6%, from current rates. The typical natural gas residential customer using 65 therms per month is expected to see an increase to their bill of \$3.94, or 6.4%, from current rates.

At the time of print, we are awaiting a final ruling on the settlement. For the most up-to-date information, visit NorthWesternEnergy.com/ratereview or scan this QR code with your phone's camera.



We know many Montanans are facing challenging times, and no one wants to see rising electric and natural gas bills. We know our customers count on us every day for safe, reliable energy service. We are strengthening our energy infrastructure to make it even more resilient to strong storms, extreme temperatures and cyber-attacks. We are also working to keep bills as low as possible.

We understand a rate increase will be difficult for some of our customers, and we're here to help. NorthWestern Energy has information about energy assistance programs and can arrange flexible payment options with customers. If you have concerns about your ability to pay your bill, please contact us at 888-467-2669, email Advocate@NorthWestern.com, or stop in one of our local walk-in customer service centers.