



Sarah P. is a fan of eating healthy food.

“Especially now because I’m working from home and I’m not moving around as much,” she said.

Sarah is a Customer Associate for NorthWestern Energy in Missoula, Mont. She’s been with the company for almost three years.

Sarah’s favorite thing about her job is building relationships with customers. Before the pandemic hit, she got to know many of the regular customers who used the walk-in office. Now that she’s working from home, she’s still finding ways to connect with customers.

Sarah handles many new service requests and new construction applications. Those are typically from new customers, some of whom are new to the area, or from contractors building new homes.

“I really enjoy making those new relationships with customers and contractors,” Sarah said.

Sarah’s Spanish quinoa recipe was given to her by a friend. Sarah likes the recipe because it’s healthy and can be eaten for any meal. She often has it for breakfast with huevos rancheros or as a side dish with lunch or dinner. For those who haven’t tried quinoa, it’s a grain similar to rice but round in shape and with a nuttier flavor.

“It’s pretty versatile, which I really like,” she said.



## Spanish Quinoa

Makes about 6-8 servings

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup uncooked quinoa
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced or pressed through a garlic press
- ½ red bell pepper, diced
- ½ yellow bell pepper, diced
- 2 cups of chicken broth (water optional)
- 1 15-oz can petite diced tomatoes
- 1 tsp chili powder
- ½ tsp cumin
- ½ tsp oregano
- ¼ salt (optional)
- Dash of black pepper
- 1 Tbsp. cilantro chopped

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 In a pot, place 2 cups of chicken broth (or water) and bring to a boil. Add uncooked quinoa to pot and cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes while covered. Fluff with a fork.
- 2 In a separate skillet on med-high heat, add olive oil. Place onion, garlic and peppers in skillet and sauté for 5 minutes.
- 3 Add cooked quinoa and tomatoes to skillet and add seasonings. Stir to combine.
- 4 Top with cilantro, serve and enjoy.

## CONTACT US

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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.

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# ENERGY CONNECTIONS

## LOOK INSIDE FOR INFORMATION ON:

- Annual pipeline inspections
- Understanding pipeline safety
- Recognizing a gas pipeline leak
- What to do if you smell natural gas
- Check your meter and vents
- Plow with caution



## Annual pipeline inspections keep gas system safe

Every year, NorthWestern Energy does leak surveys on our natural gas system. This includes gas main lines, service lines and meters.

In coming months, you may see crews wandering around neighborhoods carrying what's called a sniffer. These long, hand-held wands can detect even tiny traces of natural gas, which allows us to find small leaks and get them fixed right away.

Inspectors will need to access your property to inspect your meter. If they can't reach your meter due to a locked gate or an animal in your yard, they'll come to your door and ask for access. If they can't get a hold of someone in the house, they'll send a NorthWestern Energy employee back later, so we can be sure to get a full inspection of the natural gas system. NorthWestern does not notify individual customers about inspection crews accessing their property. However, we do an automated call campaign ahead of time and post updates on NorthWestern Energy's Facebook page.

We contract with Heath Consultants, whose employees drive cars that are clearly marked with their logo and the NorthWestern Energy logo. They also wear yellow safety vests that identify them as a NorthWestern Energy contractor. They will be wearing masks when interacting with customers and maintaining social distance. In rural areas, you may also see inspectors on ATVs.

## Understanding pipeline safety

### Pipeline markers

Markers, placed at all public road and railroad crossings, show the approximate location of pipelines and identify the companies that operate them. These markers indicate the pipeline content, the name of the pipeline operator and the operator's emergency phone number. Even if the pipeline is marked, you must contact 811 for utility line locates before digging. The pipeline may not follow in a straight course between markers.

### Pipeline monitoring

As a pipeline operator, we monitor the status of our pipelines seven days a week, 24 hours a day to ensure they are safe and secure. We use computers, alarms, meters and satellite technology to control and check our pipelines. The monitoring systems detect changes in pressure and flow and can activate warnings and safeguards if a leak is detected.

### HCA's and IMP

Federal pipeline safety regulations use the concept of High Consequence Areas, or HCA's, to identify specific locations and areas where an accidental release of natural gas could have the most significant adverse consequences. Once an HCA has been identified, operators devote additional focus to ensure the integrity of pipelines in that area. We have in place an Integrity Management Program, or IMP, that defines the steps and timelines for identifying HCA's, assessing the integrity of the pipelines and taking aggressive steps to mitigate the risks to people and property near HCA's.

### Pipeline purpose and reliability

Pipelines are the safest way to transport energy products, including natural gas, crude oil and other fuels. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline & Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) regulates pipelines with the help of state partners. According to government and industry statistics, the most common cause of pipeline incidents is improper or unauthorized digging near a pipeline, which is why it's important to call 811 before you dig. Pipeline operators carefully build, maintain and monitor the integrity and security of their lines.

## Recognizing a gas pipeline leak

Call 911, if you notice any of these signs of a pipeline leak:

- An unusual blowing or hissing sound coming from the ground.
- Dirt or dust blowing from a hole in the ground.
- Bubbling ponds.
- Dead or discolored vegetation in an otherwise green area near a pipeline right of way.
- A fire close to a buried pipeline.



## What to do if you smell natural gas

NorthWestern Energy makes it easy for you to detect natural gas leaks by adding an unpleasant rotten egg or skunk-like smell to natural gas. If you smell this odor:

- Leave the area immediately.
- Do not use phones, matches, light switches or anything else that could trigger the ignition of the gas.
- When at a safe distance, call 911.



## Check your natural gas meter and vents

Your natural gas meter's regulator vent must always be clear so the flow of natural gas into the home can be regulated properly. If this vent becomes plugged, the pressure of gas being pumped into the home could either increase or decrease to a dangerous level, resulting in a fire or explosion. Any airflow blockage can lead to big problems and even carbon monoxide poisoning.

Also be sure all appliance exhaust vents are clear from blowing and drifting snow – especially after a winter storm. Blocked appliance vents could result in a loss of heat or buildup of deadly carbon monoxide in the structure.

After major snow storms, take a walk around your property and ensure all vents are clear of snow or ice and that there is a path to your gas and electric meter.

## Plow with caution

Be careful while plowing to steer clear of utility equipment. Be sure to avoid meters and transformers (the large green electric boxes often located near walkways). Even minor contact with the transformer's metal enclosure could cause damage to the conductors inside. If you hit the equipment, please report it right away.