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Weatherization Assistance Program improves homes, saves on energy bills

The Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment's [Weatherization Assistance Program](#) helps Nebraskans with low incomes weatherize their homes at no cost. When homes have more insulation, sealed leaks, and more efficient heating and cooling systems, homes become more comfortable and people can save money on their utility bills.

This program began in 1977, and as of June 2025, it has made weatherization improvements to 72,108 homes, totaling \$247million invested.

Katie Svoboda, DWEE's Weatherization program supervisor, said energy costs can place a significant burden on those with low incomes, especially the elderly, those with disabilities and families with children.

"The money these families spend on utilities cannot be used for other household essentials like food, housing or education," Svoboda said. "We want to make homes more energy efficient and comfortable, but also make the home safe."

DWEE receives funding for this program from the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program ([LIHEAP](#)) and the [U.S. Department of Energy's](#) Weatherization Assistance Program and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Roughly \$3.5 million comes from LIHEAP and \$28 million from the DOE. The LIHEAP funds include \$750,000 to use for Heating and Cooling Repair and Replacement Assistance Program (HCRRA). With the combined funding of these sources, a total of 521 homes were weatherized in Nebraska in fiscal year 2024.

Those funds are allocated to the seven [Community Action Partnership](#) agencies across the state, as well as one [non-profit agency](#) in Omaha. These organizations work with individuals and families in their areas to make weatherization improvements. Some of the most common improvements include:

- Adding insulation
- Replacing and repairing furnaces
- Reducing air leakage
- Installing high efficiency lighting
- Insulating water heater tanks and pipes
- Repairing cracked windows



Photo by Erik McLean on Unsplash

DWEE's Weatherization Assistance Program can help those with low incomes reduce their energy use by 25% by providing free weatherization services. Insulation and reducing air leakage in a home are two common weatherization improvements.

Mobile homes are also eligible for weatherization services, including underbelly insulation, window sealing and sealing air leaks. Renters are eligible, as well, but require written permission from their landlords and some restrictions apply.

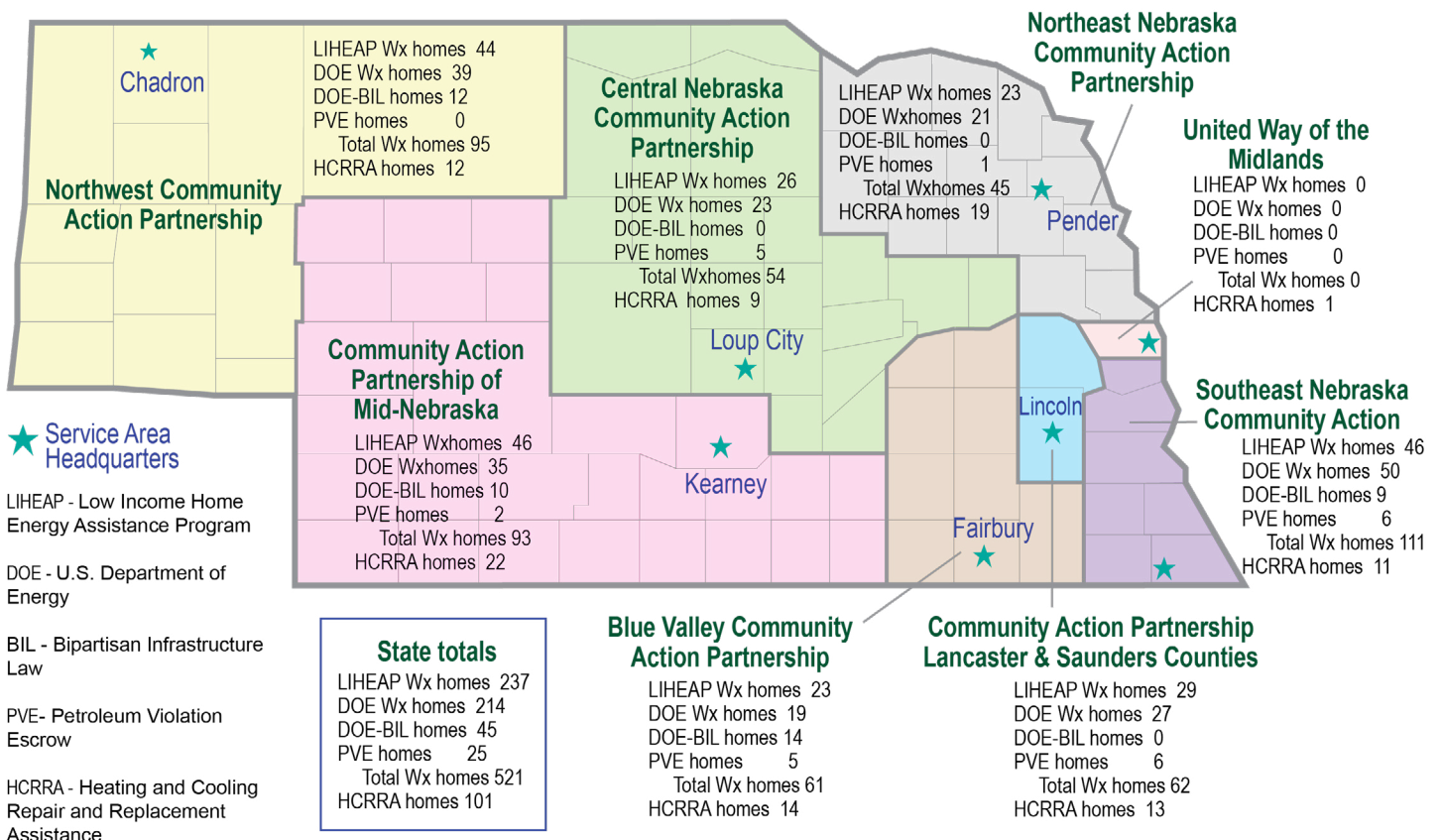
Svoboda said the groups and individuals involved in the weatherization process have come together to best serve clients.

“The network that delivers the Nebraska Weatherization Assistance Program is a group of people who are deeply committed to the clients, dedicated to the work that the program provides and has developed into a team of professionals that enjoy working together,” Svoboda said. “Watching that team grow and develop has been incredibly rewarding.”

Because this program aims to assist those with low incomes, there is an income limit; household income must fall below 200% of the federal poverty level. For example, the poverty guideline for a household of four is \$33,000. That household would qualify for the Weatherization Assistance Program if its income were less than \$66,000 – double the poverty guideline. Households with people who receive Aid to Dependent Children or Supplemental Security Income are automatically eligible for the weatherization program.

Work crews make the weatherization improvements and DWEE inspects a minimum of 10-15% of all completed homes to ensure a high quality of work was performed. Overall, the average value of weatherization services averages between \$6,000 and \$8,000. These improvements can reduce energy used for home heating by 25%, and it can provide energy savings for 10-15 years.

Total Nebraska Homes Weatherized by Area providers, July 2024-June 2025



Center for Rural Affairs provides fact sheet on Battery Energy Storage Systems

From the [Center for Rural Affairs](#)

A shift is underway in America's energy landscape. As Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) have increased by fivefold in just four years, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, rural communities are being presented with new requests to safely host and integrate this emerging technology.

A new fact sheet from the Center for Rural Affairs titled "[Building a Resilient Power Future with Battery Energy Storage Systems](#)" aims to help demystify the technology by answering common questions and providing guidance for local officials on the best practices for integrating BESS in their communities.

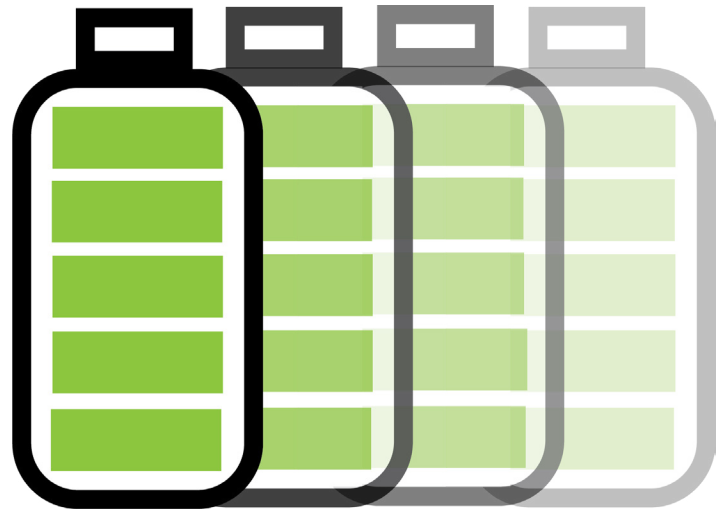
"Storage systems are becoming an important component of the electrical grid system, capturing excess energy and releasing it instantly and reliably when the grid needs it most," said Tod Bowman, policy associate with the Center for Rural Affairs. "These systems pair well with renewable energy generation, which is the fastest growing energy source, and are most often found in rural communities."

Depending on energy capacity and power rating, grid-scale BESS can provide power for minutes to several hours, and commonly uses lithium-ion batteries, which boast a durable lifespan of 10 to 20 years.

As use of the technology has spread, many states are adopting standards to mitigate concerns like thermal runaway, which are addressed in the National Fire Protection Association's 855 guidelines. Consequently, industry data shows significant progress and greater confidence in the technology, with a 3% fire incidence rate in 2023 and 97% reduction in BESS failure rates between 2018 and 2023.

The fact sheet also identifies common siting standards, such as setbacks, and the importance of ensuring consistent definitions across zoning districts. Additionally, it outlines necessary requirements for emergency response training and financial plans for decommissioning and site restoration.

"It is critical rural communities are equipped with clear best practices and safety standards as BESS rapidly transforms our energy landscape," said Bowman. "As energy providers across the Midwest and nation begin to integrate BESS, these systems represent a fast-growing and evolving technology that is paving the way for a more reliable, resilient, and clean energy future."



The Center for Rural Affairs has created a guidance document to help local officials learn common considerations for battery energy storage systems.

Energy Statistics

Fuel Price Trends

Americans tend to drive the most between July and September — roughly 30.6 miles daily compared to 25.7 in the winter, according to AAA’s 2015 [American Driving Survey](#). That increase may mean drivers are hitting up gas pumps more, which in turn can hit wallets. Using AAA’s weekly [Fuel Price Summary](#), we can see the recent national and state gas price average, as well as trends.

National Fuel Price Averages and Trends

As of [June 18, 2026](#)

June 18 National Average

\$3.999

June 11 National Average

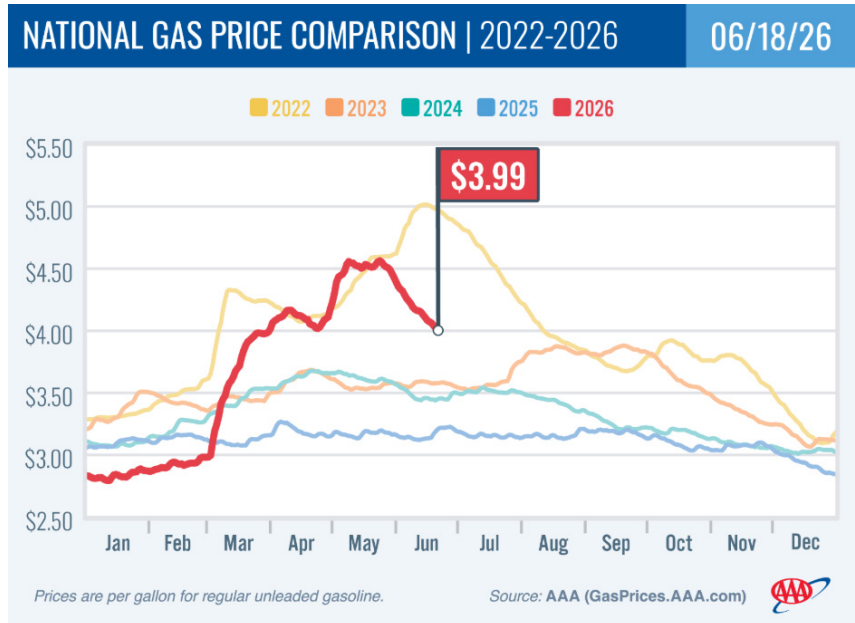
\$4.129

National Average
One Month Ago

\$4.515

National Average
One Year Ago

\$3.188



Nebraska's Regular Fuel Price Averages

Nebraska June 26
Average

\$3.664

Nebraska June 19
Average

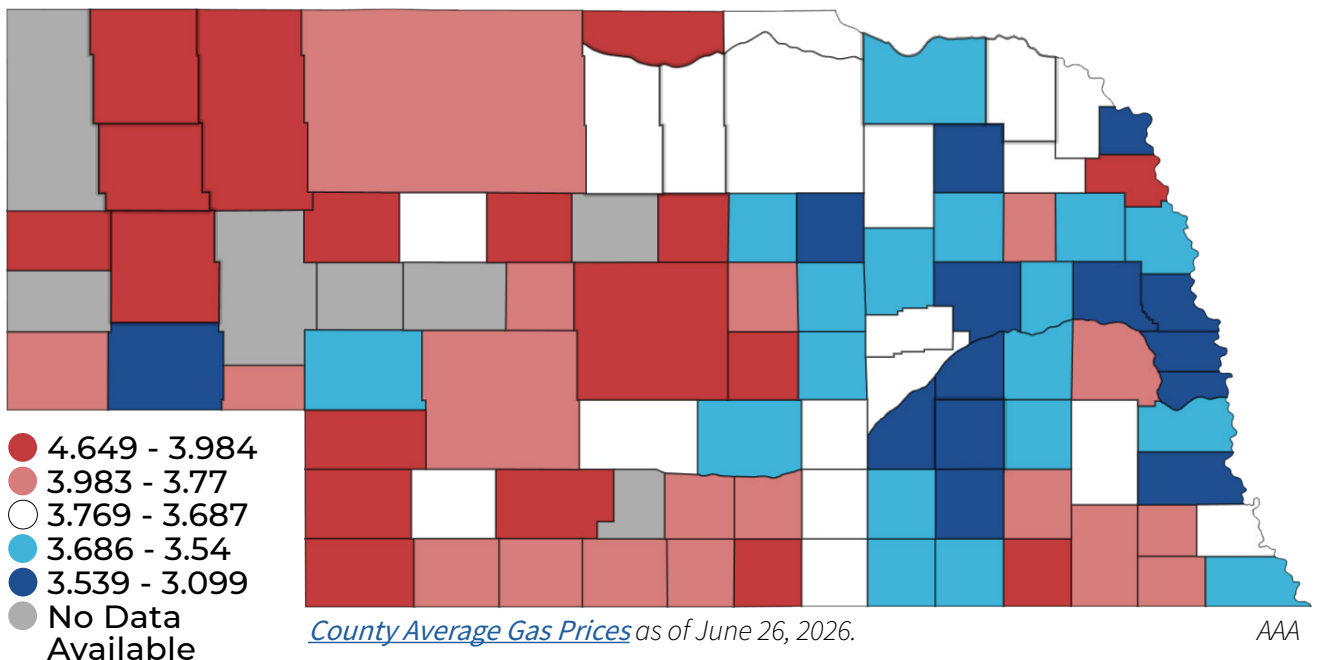
\$3.774

Nebraska Average
One Month Ago

\$4.254

Nebraska Average
One Year Ago

\$3.014



Energy Tips

Driving habits can save money at the pump

Information from the [AAA](#)

Bad driving isn't just unsafe. It's expensive. Studies have repeatedly shown that personal driving habits are the single biggest factor that affects vehicle fuel consumption. Adopting new and improved driving behaviors not only makes car travel safer, but it can also contribute to significant savings at the gas pump. Here are some simple ways you can improve your car's gas mileage:

Ownership, Maintenance & Repairs

- When buying a car, look for models that offer the best fuel economy in their class. For most drivers, an optional larger and/or more-powerful engine is unnecessary.
- Maintain your car according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Modern cars don't need "tune-ups," but regular service will ensure optimum fuel economy, performance and longevity.
- Take your car to a repair shop as soon as possible if the "Check Engine" light comes on. This indicates a problem that is causing excessive emissions and likely reducing fuel economy.
- Keep tires properly inflated. Underinflation reduces fuel economy, but more importantly, tires low on air degrade handling and braking, wear more rapidly and can overheat and blow out.



Photo by Erik McLean on Unsplash

Properly maintaining your car, driving safely, and other precautions can improve your fuel efficiency, therefore saving gas money during the summer driving season.

The Daily Drive

- Slow down and drive the speed limit. On the highway, aerodynamic drag causes fuel economy to drop off significantly as speeds increase above 50 mph.
- Avoid "jackrabbit" starts and hard acceleration. These actions greatly increase fuel consumption.
- Avoid extended idling to warm up the engine, even in winter. It's unnecessary and wastes fuel.
- Avoid prolonged idling in general. If your car will be stopped for more than 60 seconds, shut off the engine to save fuel. Many newer cars have automatic engine stop-start systems that do this.
- When driving in town, adjust your speed to "time" the traffic lights. This reduces repeated braking and acceleration that consume additional fuel.
- When approaching a red light or stop sign, take your foot off the gas early and allow your car to coast down to a slower speed until it is time to brake.
- Accelerate smoothly with light to moderate throttle. This allows the automatic transmission to upshift into higher gears sooner, reducing engine rpm and saving fuel.
- Use cruise control to help maintain a constant speed and save fuel. However, never use cruise control on

slippery roads because a loss of vehicle control could result.

- If your car has a manual transmission, upshift as soon as you can without “lugging” the engine. When practical, you can also save fuel by skip-shifting – for example, going directly from first gear to third.

Don't be Fueled into Wasting Gas

The practices above will definitely help improve fuel economy. Also, keep these more general fuel-saving tips in mind:

- Minimize your use of air conditioning. Even at highway speeds, open windows have less effect on fuel economy than the engine power required to operate the air conditioning compressor.
- Plan ahead to accomplish multiple errands in one trip, and whenever possible travel outside high-traffic times of the day.
- If you own more than one car, use the most fuel-efficient model that meets the needs of any given journey.

Other Tips & Tricks

- In hot weather, park in the shade or use a windshield sunscreen to lessen heat buildup inside the car. This reduces the need for air conditioning (and thus fuel) to cool down the car.
- Remove unnecessary and bulky items from your car. It takes more fuel to accelerate a heavier car, and the reduction in fuel economy is greater for small cars than for larger models.
- Minimize your use of roof racks and remove special carriers when not in use. On the highway, even an empty bike, canoe or ski rack can reduce fuel economy, and a loaded rack or car-top container will have a major effect on gas mileage.
- AAA research has found that unless premium fuel is recommended or required by your car's manufacturer, it provides no added benefit. Motorists should refer to their vehicle's owner's manual to check which type of gasoline is recommended for their engine.