

Nebraska

FARMER

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Irrigator gets the message

By DON McCABE

IN 50 years of farming, George Albin has surmounted countless challenges, so the switch from dryland farmer to irrigator was just one more to take on.

George has been hearing impaired since birth, but his own perseverance and the patience, love and support of his wife, Sherril, have all played a role in his farming success.

Technology also makes a huge difference, especially when it comes to his two new center pivots located a good 25 miles from the couple's home in Hastings. One quarter section is north of Grand Island, the other south of Wood River.

George receives alerts from either pivot through text messaging on his cell phone. "It's not just the teenagers that use it [text messaging]," he explained in an interview at his home, where Sherril joined him in answering questions.

In meetings with their irrigation dealer, George heard about FieldSentry, Lindsay's

At a glance

- Hearing-impaired farmer relies on technology.
- Cell phone sends him a text message if pivots shut down.
- It saves time and mileage on their vehicles.

wireless Internet-based communications system that allows irrigators to monitor and manage center pivots remotely, either from a home computer or cell phone. He's unable to hear the cell phone ring, but its vibration and text messaging lets him know if something is wrong, including if a pivot stops for any unplanned reason.

It also lets him know when the local power district stops his systems as part of its electric load management program. Under that program, the utility can shut down electric pumps at any time during high-load periods.

Sherril receives the same alerts on her cell phone.

FieldSentry's palm-sized remote telemetry unit, which has a built-in cellular modem,



PIVOT ALERTS: George Albin's two new pivots are approximately 25 miles from his home.

can be installed inside the pivot's control panel.

Most often he relies on the Internet on the home computer to start and stop pivots and conduct other functions, including checking their direction, rotation speed and water-application rate.

The pivots are equipped for chemigation. Should the chemigation pumps stop for any

reason, George would receive a text message alert.

"I can jump in the pickup and check out the pivot after I get a text message alert that's something wrong," George says. "That eliminates the need to drive to the pivots everyday."

It also saves gas and wear and tear on the pickup.

Two years ago, the Albins sold their dryland farm north of

Guide Rock, where the aquifer yielded inadequate groundwater for irrigation. They farmed there for years before building a new home just outside Hastings.

After selling the dryland farm, they invested in two quarters in the Platte River Valley.

"The Internet and Lindsay FieldSentry let me be more independent," George adds.

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