

POWERLINE

A monthly newsletter for co-op members of Corn Belt Energy

November 2011

Are You Prepared?

It's coming to that time of the year where weather conditions are ripe for ice and wind, which can create a disastrous situation for power lines. Take time *now* to prepare your family and your home for any extended outages that may occur this winter:

- Establish an alternative heat source and stockpile fuel in case your primary heat source is cut off. How would your family stay warm during a multi-day power outage?
- Purchase a food thermometer to test the temperature of refrigerated/frozen foods during extended outages.
- Keep charged cell phone batteries or portable phone chargers on hand.
- Review the process for manually operating an electric garage door.
- Know the location of your fire extinguishers and check to make sure they are usable.
- Make sure you have a battery-operated radio and plenty of fresh batteries.
- Familiarize yourself with your main electrical panel; You may be required to turn off the main breaker or have to reset circuit breakers. Make sure you know how to shut off your water and gas valves.



If you have advanced notice of a winter storm approaching, we encourage you to take these precautions:

- Locate your disaster preparedness kit (learn more at ready.gov)
- Charge your cell phone(s).
- Make sure flashlights and emergency radios have fresh batteries.
- Turn your refrigerator to its coldest setting and leave the door closed in case your power goes out.
- Purchase necessary food items and additional medication if time allows; Stock up on extra diapers and formula for infants.
- Fill up your vehicle's gas tank if time allows.
- Stock up on cash and coins as ATMs may not be functional during extended outages.
- Stock up on fuel for your generator or alternative heating source.

POWER OUTAGE:

- Check your electrical panel to confirm the outage.
- Report your outage at 1-800-879-0339. Call from the phone associated with your account if possible to make the reporting process easier for you and our automated system.
- Disconnect or turn off appliances that were on when the power outage occurred. Leave a light on so you will know when power is restored.
- Visit our website, call us, or listen to the radio for outage updates.
- Check on neighbors who may need assistance.

STAY INFORMED:

- Visit our website at www.cornbeltenergy.com for outage updates and even view a live outage map.
- Follow us on Twitter or find us on Facebook for updates on major outages.
- Call us at 1-800-879-0339 to hear prerecorded status updates.
- Listen to local radio stations for periodic status updates.

Creating a Safe Home for the Holidays

Make safety a priority this holiday season!

Few traditions are as unique to the holidays as festooning our homes and yards with twinkling lights and festive decorations. While these displays add to the magic of the season, they also increase our risks for holiday fires and injuries. The good news is that it's not difficult to make your home ready to safely host all of your favorite holiday activities. So follow these steps to ensure that your traditions result in a safe, bright, and happy time for your family.

Smoke Detectors

Take time out from your party preparations to test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms should be installed on every level of the home and outside each sleeping area. Smoke alarms should also be located inside each bedroom. Be sure to share your family fire escape plan with any overnight guests.

Electric Cords

Arrange your holiday decorations to avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many lights, cords, or appliances. Inspect all decorations, cords, and outlets for damage before use. Keep electrical cords out of doorways and high traffic areas where they pose a tripping hazard. Do not damage cords by pinching them or attaching them with staples or nails.

Child Proofing

Keep young visitors safe by preparing your home before they arrive. If your home is not already "child proof," install tamper resistant receptacles or use safety covers on all unused electrical outlets. Store breakables, candles, matches, and other potentially dangerous items in inaccessible or locked areas. Don't

forget to put away small items, like buttons, coins, and jewelry, which are a choking hazard. Use safety gates at the top and bottom of stairways to keep babies and toddlers safe. Make sure children are supervised at all times in the kitchen and anywhere space heaters, candles, or fireplaces are being used. Never leave the kitchen when something is cooking.

Christmas Lights

Carefully inspect each electrical decoration and extension cord before use, and discard any damaged items. Cracked sockets, bare or frayed wires, and loose connections may cause a serious shock or fire. Avoid overloading outlets, which can overheat and also cause a fire. The Electrical Safety Foundation International recommends never connecting more than three strands of incandescent lights together. Do not pinch cords in windows or doors or under heavy furniture.

When decorating outside, make sure outdoor outlets are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Check that all items and extension cords are marked for outdoor use and exercise extreme caution when decorating near overhead power lines. Use a wooden or fiberglass ladder instead of metal. Keep yourself and all of your equipment at least 10 feet from power lines.

Christmas Trees

Take special care with Christmas trees. If purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. Heated rooms dry out live trees—even fresh ones—rapidly. Place the

tree at least 3 feet away from all heat sources, including fireplaces and space heaters. Be sure to keep the stand filled with water. For artificial trees, look for the label "fire resistant." Decorate your tree, live or artificial, with non-combustible or flame-resistant materials. Never use burning candles on or near your tree. Keep decorations, gifts, and other combustibles at least 3 feet from heat sources or open flame. Turn off and unplug all decorations before leaving home or turning in for the night.

It's easy to get caught up in the hectic pace of holiday entertaining—cookies to bake, decorations to hang, presents to wrap... but don't overlook safety during the rush. The winter holiday period marks peak time for home fires and preventable injuries.

Whether your house is the most festive on the block or you prefer a more low-key style, make safety an important part of your holiday preparations.

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International ; Learn more at holidaysafety.org



SECURITY LIGHTS



As the days grow shorter, it might be a good time to consider a security yard light, available to our members for a low monthly rate. The price includes maintenance and electricity for an automatic dusk-to-dawn 100-watt sodium vapor light.

Corn Belt can install these lights for members in an overhead area on a Corn Belt-owned pole where there is currently a service. There is no installation fee, but we do require that you keep the light for at least twelve months.

Contact our Engineering Department at 1-800-879-0339 for more details.

Electric Heat Rate

If your home utilizes an electric heat source - including geothermal - you can take advantage of Corn Belt's Electric Heat Rate of 4.45 cents/ kWh (plus any additional current cost of power as indicated by the Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment on your monthly statement).

All electric heat is sub-metered through equipment supplied by Corn Belt Energy and the Electric Heat Rate is applied to your sub-metered usage from Oct. 1 through April 30. This rate is applicable when at least 50% of the square footage of a home is heated electrically from a hardwired 240 volt electric heat source.

To see if you're already receiving this rate, check for a Rate 10 or Rate 19 line item charge on your monthly statement. For more information, call Justin Stuva at 1-800-879-0339 x235.

Portable Generator Safety

Portable electric generators come in handy during prolonged outages, but things could turn deadly if they're not used properly. Follow these tips to stay safe:

- Follow manufacturers' directions for installation and operation.
- To prevent electric shock, make sure your generator is properly grounded.
- Operate electric generators or other fuel-powered machines outside where deadly carbon monoxide fumes cannot enter the home.
- Do not overload the generator by operating more appliances and equipment than it can handle.

- Individual appliances should be plugged directly into the receptacle outlet of the generator using appropriately sized extension cords to carry the electric load. Never connect generators directly to your home's wiring or household outlet.
- Do not refuel a generator while it is running. Store fuel outside of living areas and away from heat sources like water heater pilot lights.
- Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting it down.





Contact Us

1-800-879-0339

Call this number to report an outage and call from a phone associated with your account if possible.

LOCATION

1 Energy Way
Bloomington, IL 61705

OFFICE HOURS

8:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Monday - Friday

cbec@cornbeltenergy.com
www.cornbeltenergy.com



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Outage Reports

Monthly outage reports are available at www.cornbeltenergy.com under "Outages." To request a printed copy, simply call us and we'll mail or fax it to you.



Prescription Discounts

Use your free Co-op Connections card to save 10% to 60% on prescriptions not covered by insurance at participating pharmacies including CVS, Walgreens, Wal-Mart, Target and many more! Simply present your card with your prescription at any participating pharmacy and pay the discounted price; no additional forms or paperwork are needed. Visit www.connections.coop to search for participating pharmacies. Need a card? Call us at 1-800-879-0339.

Scholarships for High School Seniors

This year, eight scholarships of \$1,250 each will be awarded to eligible high school seniors through the Illinois Electric Cooperative (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program.

Four scholarships will be awarded to students who are children of an Illinois electric cooperative member receiving service from the cooperative, including Corn Belt Energy members.

A fifth scholarship, the Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship, is awarded to a student who is the child of an Illinois electric cooperative employee.

The sixth and seventh scholarships are reserved for students enrolling full-time at a two-year Illinois community college who are children of Illinois electric cooperative members, employees or directors.

A new eighth scholarship, the LaVern and Nola McEntire Lineworker's Scholarship, will be awarded to help pay for costs associated with lineworker's school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield. Relatives of cooperative members are eligible to apply.



Candidates are judged on the basis of grade point average, college entrance exam scores, work and volunteer experience, school and civic activities, and a short essay that demonstrates their knowledge of electric cooperatives. Applications will be posted at www.cornbeltenergy.com under "Community" until December 31. Applications must be postmarked by January 1, 2012.