

POWERLINE

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

December 2013

Are You Prepared?

It's that time of 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. Kerosene heaters and wood-burning fireplaces are popular heating alternatives.
- 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. Know how to shut off your water and gas valves.



If you have advanced notice of a major 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).
- Stock up on fuel for your generator or alternative heating source.
- 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.

POWER OUTAGE?

- Check your electrical panel to confirm the outage.
- Call us at 1-800-879-0339 to report your outage or report it through your SmartHub mobile app.
- 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.
- Check on neighbors who may need assistance.
- Visit our website, call us, or listen to the radio for updates on major outages (see below).

STAY INFORMED!

There are several ways to stay informed during large outage events (*those affecting 500 members or more*):

- Visit our website at www.cornbeltenergy.com for updates on major outages and to 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 during major outages.

Smart Ways to Stay Warm

Heating your home uses a lot of energy, so making a few changes can add up to noticeable savings on your energy bills. Your electric cooperative is here to help with these money-saving tips:

Take advantage of the sun's radiant heat energy and open your blinds and shades during sunny days. Let your home make use of those rays!

Program or adjust your thermostat to no higher than 68 degrees during the winter months for maximum cost savings. And make sure to turn down the temperature a few more degrees when you're sleeping and when you leave the house.

Hot air travels upward. If you have high ceilings, use your ceiling fans on a low, clockwise setting to circulate that heat back down.

Close the heat registers and doors of unoccupied rooms during the winter months.



Make sure to close your fireplace damper when not in use; you don't want your warm air leaking out through the chimney!

Check around your windows and doors for drafts. A tube of caulk and some weather stripping can go a long way to seal your home from blustery winds.

Heating your home can account for over 50% of your energy use in the winter.

Energy Audit Discount

Are you experiencing high utility bills or uncomfortable areas within your home? Corn Belt Energy is here to help you identify energy efficiency concerns and we'll offer unbiased advice on how to fix them.

For the month of December, we're offering a home energy audit (including a blower door test and infrared scan) at a reduced rate of \$150 (normally \$300).

To lock in the discounted rate, your energy audit must be scheduled during the month of December. Contact our Energy Advisor, Justin Stuva, at 1-800-879-0339 x235 or justin.stuva@cornbeltenergy.com to schedule your audit today!

Not in the market for an energy audit? Co-op members can now track their hourly electric use through their new SmartHub online account. Once you've successfully logged in, you can track your use down to the hour, see how average daily temperatures affect your heating costs, and compare monthly usage data so you can make informed energy choices.

To download the free mobile apps for Apple or Android devices, search for "smarthub" in your app store.



To access SmartHub from your desktop, simply click "Account Log-in" at www.cornbeltenergy.com and log in with your same email address and password.



Creating a Safe Home for the Holidays

Make safety a priority this 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.

Always unplug Christmas lights before you leave the house or go to bed. Use a timer to make it even easier to save on your energy use.

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





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 

Scholarships for High School Seniors

In spring 2014, eight scholarships of \$1,500 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, 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.

An 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. Military veterans and relatives of cooperative members, employees and directors 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. Applications will be posted at www.cornbeltenergy.com under "Community" and must be submitted online by December 31.



Youth to Washington Tour

High school sophomores and juniors with a passion for leadership and government are encouraged to apply for an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C. in June!

Those who currently receive electricity from Corn Belt are welcome to nominate a child or grandchild to attend the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. Up to 10 applicants will be selected by an impartial panel of judges to attend Illinois Cooperative Youth Day in Springfield on April 2.

From that group, two students will be chosen to represent Corn Belt Energy by attending the Youth to Washington Tour, an all-expense-paid trip to

Washington D.C. from June 13-20 with other statewide and national winners.

The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour has been bringing high school students to Washington D.C. for over 50 years. On the tour, students will learn about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government. They participate in National Youth Day, visit with their representatives and senators, and explore the sights around the nation's capital.

Applications can be found on our website at www.cornbeltenergy.com under "Community." Applications must be received by February 28.