

Safe Electricity plants seeds of caution around power lines on the farm

Be aware of potential hazards during planting season

As farmers make plans to return to their fields for spring planting, Safe Electricity urges farm workers to be particularly alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines. Electricity is one of the most overlooked, yet deadly hazards of working on a farm. According to the National Safety Council, farmers are at an increased risk for electrocution and electric shock injury compared to non-farmers. In fact, 3.6 percent of youth under the age of 20 who work and/or live around farms are killed each year from electrocution. As part of the "Teach Learn Care" TLC campaign, the program urges workers to evaluate farm activities and work practices and to share that information with others – an activity that doesn't take a lot of time but can literally save lives. By following a few safety rules, these tragic accidents can be prevented. Start by making sure everyone knows to maintain a minimum 10-foot clearance from the lines.

"The minimum 10 foot distance is a 360-degree rule – below, to the side and above lines," says Jay Solomon, University of Illinois Extension Engineering Educator. "Many farm electrical accidents involving power lines happen when loading or preparing to transport equipment to fields, or while performing maintenance or repairs on farm machinery near lines. It can be difficult to estimate distance and sometimes a power line is closer than it looks. A spotter or someone with a broader view can help."

The most common source of



electric shocks come from operating machinery such as large tractors with front loaders, portable grain augers, fold-up cultivators, moving grain elevators and any equipment with an antenna. Handling long items such as irrigation pipe, ladders and rods also pose the risk of contact with power lines. Coming too close to a power line while working is dangerous because electricity can arc, or "jump," to conducting material or objects.

Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting tractors on trailer beds. Many tractors are now equipped with radios and communications systems that have very tall antennas extending from the cab that could make contact with power lines. Avoid raising the arms of planters, cultivators or truck beds near power lines and never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.

Remember, non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt

contamination. Do not try to clear storm-damage debris and limbs near power lines or fallen lines.

Overhead electric wires aren't the only electrical contact that can result in a serious incident. Pole guy wires, used to stabilize utility poles, are grounded. However, when one of the guy wires is broken it can cause an electric current disruption. This can make those neutral wires anything but harmless. If you hit a guy wire and break it, call the utility to fix it. Don't do it yourself. When dealing with electrical poles and wires, always call the electric utility.

Even the best laid plans often go awry and Safe Electricity wants farm workers to be prepared if their equipment does come in contact with power lines.

"It's almost always best to stay in the cab and call for help," Solomon said. "If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path to the ground and electrocution is the result. Even if a line has

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Board meeting report

Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting
December 21, 2009

Trustees present were: Frank Czyzewski, Bill Croy, Frank Herman, Kevin Logan, Bob Pierson, Howard Poehler, Danny Schnepfer and Greg Smith. Also present were Executive Vice President/General Manager John Meng, and Cooperative Attorney Melanie Pearce. Absent was Trustee Rudolphi. The invocation was given by President Czyzewski.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held Nov. 23, 2009.

Accepted 18 new members for service.

Canceled 15 members no longer receiving service.

Approved work orders in the amount of \$33,191.04.

Accepted the disbursement list for the month of November, 2009.

Approved the financial and maintenance reports for the month of November, 2009 as presented by Gen. Mgr. Meng.

Heard a report by Trustee Logan concerning the recent AIEC Board meeting.

Heard a report by Trustee Herman concerning the recent SIPC meeting.

Informed rate at which CFC Loans were repriced.

Approved a resolution authorizing a Line of Credit with CoBank.

Approved a Professional Services Agreement with The Web Café, Inc.

Reviewed, Discussed estimates to replace UPN Server.

Approved proposal provided by The Web Café to replace UPN Server.

Approved Proposed Rebate changes for Geo-Thermal and Air to Air Heat Pumps.

Appointed Frank Czyzewski as the NRECA delegate and Richard Rudolphi as the alternate. Frank Herman as the CFC delegate and Danny Schnepfer as the alternate. Kevin Logan as the NRTC delegate and Bill Croy as the alternate. Richard Rudolphi as the Federated delegate and Bob Pierson as the alternate.

Heard a report concerning the status of converting 2-way radios to narrowband.

Approved purchase of one vehicle

radio and two handheld radios.

Approved December 2009 write-offs of \$1,322.94.

Informed of lower IRS allowable mileage rates, and meals and incident expenses rate.

Heard a report by Gen. Mgr. Meng regarding 1 purchase power agreement and Approved same as presented.

Heard and Approved a report by Gen. Mgr. Meng regarding the retirement of Capital Credits to the estate of 1 deceased member pursuant to Cooperative Policy.

Heard a report by Gen. Mgr. Meng regarding costs related to Credit Card processing provider and Approved new service provider if costs of services are competitive.

Discussed the upcoming NRECA Annual Meeting.

Heard a report by Trustee Pierson regarding the status of the Clay County Water, Inc Phase II project.

Informed of minimal fee increase for AIEC lobbyists.

Adjournment.

Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc.

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618-662-2171
800-582-9012

Office hours:
7:30 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.

Clay County water update

Clay County Water has been notified by USDA Rural Development (RD) to go out for bids for Phase 2.

The construction includes parts of the following townships; S.E. Songer, North Harter, South Louisville and North Stanford. We will be opening bids on the Phase 2 project on March 9, 2010.

Construction is anticipated to start mid May to mid June. Please contact us if you are at all interested in the water because the tap fees will be increasing.

We have also been invited for a funding application for the Phase 3 project which includes Southeast Xenia, South Stanford, South Harter, and South Clay City Townships.

We will now start the process of finalizing the map of where exactly the line will go. If you have not been contacted, or would like to sign up for water service to your location, please call. Do not put this off any longer.

Doug Hockman 662-6666, Sue Pettit 662-4305, Bob Pierson 662-7471, Kye Hemphill 662-4590, Bill Seelman 662-8479, Dwight Edgington 678-2782 or Kevin Henry 618-838-6123.

**"Seeds of Caution" continued
from 16a**

landed on the ground, there is still potential for the area to be energized. Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until the electric utility arrives to make sure power to the line is cut off."

Solomon does provide solutions for leaving the cab if necessary, as in the case of fire or electrical fire.

"In that scenario, the proper action is to jump – not step – with both feet hitting the ground at the same time," Solomon said. "Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time. Hop to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area."

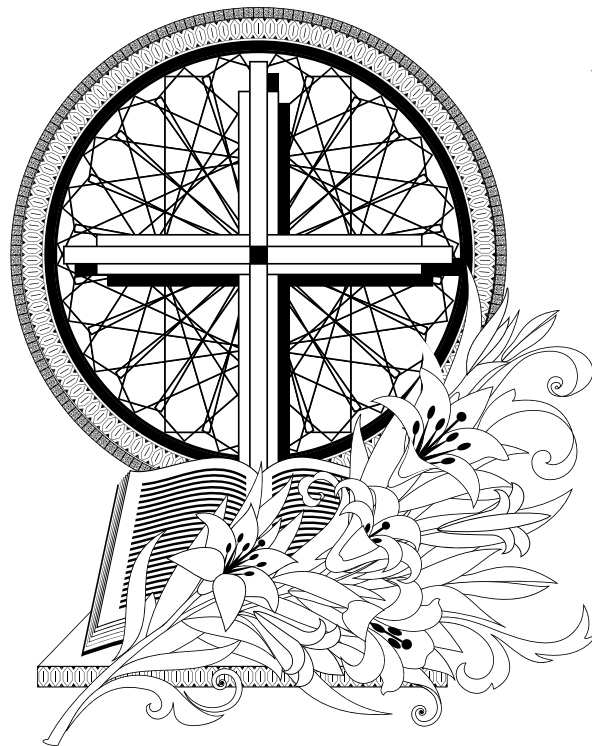
Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or even touch the equipment. Many electrocutions occur when operators try to return to the equipment before the power has been shut off.

Managers should make sure workers are educated on these precautions and danger areas need to be thoroughly identified and labeled. Call the local utility company to measure line height – no one should attempt this on their own without professional assistance. Designate preplanned routes that avoid hazard area and educate other workers on their location.

Farmers may want to consider moving or burying power lines around buildings or busy pathways where many farm activities take place. If planning a new out building or farm structure, contact your power supplier for information on minimum safe clearances from overhead and underground power lines. And if you plan to dig beyond normal tilling, activities such as deep-ripping or sub-soiling, call the utility locator service to mark underground utilities first.

For more electrical safety information, visit www.SafeElectricity.org. "Teach Learn Care" TLC is a public service campaign of Safe Electricity, a safety public awareness program created and supported by a coalition of hundreds of organizations, including electric cooperatives, educators and others committed to promoting electrical safety.

*Clay Electric
Office will
be closed on
Good Friday,
April 2, 2010*



Three ways to pay your electric bill each month

We now offer credit card payments for your monthly electric bills. We are accepting **VISA and MASTERCARD** for payment of your electric bill. Just by stopping in or calling, we can charge your payment on your credit card. Call 662-2171 or 1-800-582-9012 to arrange for credit card payments.

In addition to this we also have the **Automatic Clearing House (ACH)** payments available. This payment is deducted directly from your checking account on the 24th of the month. There is no forgetting to pay or worrying about payment if you are away from home and you still receive a monthly bill card showing your amount and usage.

We also have available **Budget Billing**. This is a fixed budget plan based on the applicant's previous twelve months billing history. So if you are on a tight

budget or a fixed income, this plan might be what you need.

This might also be the time to sign up for our **Special Electric Rates**. If you have permanently installed electric heat, be it an electric furnace, heat pump, ceiling strip heat, baseboard, or geo-thermal, you may qualify for our electric heat rate or our total electric rate. The electric heat **rate 21** is for homes that have electric heat but may also have a gas appliance such as a water heater or range. The total electric **rate 31** is for homes that are total electric and do not have any gas appliances.

To implement any of our payment services or for more information on our special rates, please call your Cooperative office at 662-2171 or 1-800-582-9012.

Do-it-yourselfers, make safety and efficiency a top priority

Spring is the time of year when many individuals begin work on home improvements. While making a to-do-list, keep in mind that there are many federal tax incentives to include efficiency improvements during repairs and new construction. Before people start tackling do-it-yourself projects, Safe Electricity and Clay Electric Cooperative asks everyone to take precautions before starting renovations or construction projects, especially when working around electrical equipment and overhead power lines.

"Efficiency and safety can go hand in hand by thinking and planning ahead," said Clay Electric Cooperative Executive Vice President / General Manager John Meng. "Before tackling any project, prepare for the job. Make sure you have the right tools and materials and take note of any potential hazards in the work area such as overhead power lines or outdoor outlets that lack ground fault protection (GFCIs)."

Simple actions like replacing standard light bulbs with compact florescent bulbs (CFLs) and sealing air leaks with weather stripping or caulk can produce substantial savings on your energy bill. You can also receive tax incentives for improvements such as replacing old windows with higher efficiency ones and you'll be helping the environment as well.

"Be willing to hire a licensed professional for projects that involve electrical wiring, or when working close to electrical equipment," adds Gen. Mgr. Meng "Some work, like trimming trees near power lines and upgrading outdated electrical systems, is best left to professionals."

Safety tips to keep in mind:

- Make sure you have the right tools and equipment for the job. Use only extension cords that are rated for outdoor use when working outside. Keep your work area tidy and don't allow your power cords to tangle. Make sure outlets have ground fault protection. Use a portable ground



fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) cord if your outdoor outlets don't have GFCIs.

- Look up and around you. Be sure to lower your long equipment when you are moving it. Carry ladders and other long items horizontally whenever possible. Remember, aluminum ladders, as well as wooden ladders, can conduct electricity. Fiberglass provides better protection against electric shock.
- Be especially careful when working near power lines attached to your house. Keep equipment and yourself at least 10 feet from lines. Never trim trees near power lines – leave that to the professionals. Never use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near electric lines. Contact a professional maintenance contractor.
- Use heavy-duty, three-prong extension cords for tools with three-prong plugs. Never remove or bend back the third prong on extension cords. It is a safety feature designed to reduce the risk of electrocution or shock.
- If your projects include digging, like building a deck or planting a tree, call your local underground utility locator before you begin. Never assume the location or depth of underground utility lines. This service is free, prevents the inconvenience of having utilities interrupted and can help you avoid serious injury.
- If it's raining or the ground is wet, don't use electric power yard tools.

Never use electrical appliances or touch circuit breakers or fuses when you're wet or standing in water. Keep electric equipment at least 10 feet from wet areas.

Make certain home electrical systems and wiring are adequate to support increased electric demands of new electric appliances, home additions or remodeling projects. Home electrical systems age and deteriorate over time which means they're less efficient and costly than newer means available today. Replace worn and outdated wiring, and add enough outlets for appliances and electronics. Safe Electricity strongly recommends this NOT be a do-it-yourself project.

"Hire a licensed professional to perform an electrical inspection and do any recommended electrical work or upgrades," said Meng. "Do-it-yourself projects are a great way to save money, but where electricity is concerned it's always best to consult a professional."

For more information on electrical safety, please visit www.SafeElectricity.org. For information on federal tax incentives in 2010, visit www.energy.gov/taxbreaks.

Safe Electricity is a program of the Energy Education Council, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting electrical safety and energy efficiency. Safe Electricity is supported by a coalition of hundreds of organizations, including electric utilities, educators and other entities committed to promoting safe use of electricity.