

Watch for signs of home electrical system overloads

The long days of summer bring hot and humid temperatures to many areas. The higher temps increase the need for cooling sensations all day long. Summertime's increased electrical use increases the risk of fire in homes with older or damaged wiring systems. Air conditioning and home cooling demands during long periods of hot weather can strain and overload a home's electrical system, a serious shock and fire hazard.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), electrical distribution systems are the third leading cause of home structure fires. These fires cause the most property damage, are the second leading cause of death, and the third leading cause of home fire injuries. Large appliances, such as air conditioners, are responsible for almost 20 percent of consumer product electrocutions each year.

As part of the "Teach Learn Care" TLC campaign, Safe Electricity urges everyone to be aware of the added stress placed on a home's electrical systems during summer months, and take steps to keep your loved ones safe.

"Underwriters Laboratories estimates more than one-third of houses in the United States are more than 50 years old," said Mike Ashenfelter, an electrical safety inspector. "Considering the increase in appliance usage and related electrical demands over the past half century, many older homes are not adequately wired to handle and support the increased demands."

Outdated wiring can overheat



due to the increased loads required to run the appliances typically found in today's homes. If the wiring is deteriorating or crumbling it can damage its own insulation, putting the system at risk for fire.

In order to help protect your home and loved ones, watch for these warning signs:

- Lights often flicker, blink or dim momentarily.
- Circuit breakers trip or fuses blow often.
- Cords or wall plates are warm to the touch or discolored.
- Crackling, sizzling or buzzing is heard from outlets.

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If you have any of these present, you should have your home inspected by a professional.

"A home electrical inspection to find and correct hidden hazards could prevent many tragedies," said Ashenfelter. "The time and investment in having a qualified electrician check your residence, and perform a few home repairs and upgrades, are small in comparison to the protection and safety they provide to your family and home."

Safe Electricity recommends an electrical system inspection for all dwellings 40 years old or older and when purchasing a previously-owned home. Most mortgage companies require an electrical inspection on the purchase of a new home before a loan can be approved anyway. You should also have an inspection when you've had a major renovation, if you've added major new appliances in the last 10 years, or have extension cords or power strips permanently in use.

"Extension cords should only be used temporarily and should be in good condition with a sufficient amp or wattage rating," Ashenfelter said. "Never use cords which are frayed,

stretched or worn and keep them out of the path of foot traffic."

You should never use an extension cord for air conditioners, electric heaters or fans and never run them behind baseboards or beneath carpets or furniture. If electrical items are close together, such as with computer equipment, use a plug bar or surge protector. However, be sure to avoid overloading the electrical circuit, which can create a fire hazard.

In addition to ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets, designed for protection from electrical shocks, Safe Electricity encourages homeowners to consider having a professional install arc-fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) on circuits in bedrooms. The National Electric

Code now requires AFCIs in new residential construction.

No matter the season, or age of homes, residents should be vigilant and continually check for electrical hazards such as cracked or fraying electrical cords, overloaded outlets and circuits, and improper wattage light bulbs in lamps and light fixtures. Also, make sure smoke alarms are placed and functioning properly.

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.

Check out our Web site!

Our site offers information about the history of our cooperative, bill payment options, our youth programs (such as Youth to Washington and Youth Day), the Clay County Water, Inc. project, and more.

Visit us online today!

www.ceci.coop



An Energy Efficiency Program for Clay Electric Cooperative Members

With our new HomE program, you can earn up to \$1,500 in rebates for making energy-efficient improvements to your home. Call for more details on this program 618-662-2171 or 1-800-582-9012.

The Rebates

- \$1,500 – Geothermal heat pumps closed loop (14.1 EER or 3.3 COP)
- \$1,500 – Geothermal heat pumps open loop (16.2 EER or 3.6 COP)
- \$1,000 – Air source heat pumps (16 SEER)
- \$350 – Natural Gas or LP furnace (95% efficiency)
- \$350 – Central air conditioner (16 SEER)
- \$250 – Heat pump water heater (2.0 Energy Factor)
- 30% of cost of insulation and weatherization (max of \$500)

Maximum rebate per household is \$1,500. Rebates began May 10, 2010, and will continue until the money is exhausted.



 Clay Electric
Co-operative, Inc.

Keep your cool while the power is out

Safe Electricity offers tips for weathering prolonged power outages

A number of circumstances can cause power interruptions and damage from severe summer storms can cause outages that last days. When a power outage occurs during hot weather, take steps to maintain safety and comfort until power is restored.

“Many summer power outages are due to severe storms with high winds that topple utility poles and power lines,” said Molly Hall, executive director of Safe Electricity. “It’s important to stay clear of downed power lines at all times, even during cleanup efforts. Be alert to the possibility that tree limbs or debris may hide an electrical hazard.”

Assume that any dangling wires you encounter are electrical and treat all downed or hanging lines as if they are energized. If you are driving and come upon a downed power line, stay in your vehicle, warn others to stay away and contact emergency personnel or electric utility. Also when driving, be careful at intersections where traffic lights may be out. Stop at all railroad crossings, and treat road intersections with traffic signals as a four-way stop before proceeding with caution.

If power to your home is out for a prolonged period, know and understand important safety precautions and steps to cope with heat until power is restored:

- Remember to call your electric utility immediately to report the outage.
- Dress in loose, lightweight clothing and stay on the coolest, lowest level of your home.
- Use natural ventilation to cool homes, and consider purchasing battery-powered fans.
- Drink plenty of water and avoid heavy meals, caffeinated and alcoholic drinks.
- Keep fridge or freezer doors closed. A freezer that is half full

or full can keep foods frozen 24 to 48 hours. Foods should stay safe in an unopened refrigerator up to four hours. If an outage lasts longer than four hours, remove and pack meat, milk and other dairy products in a cooler with ice.

- Use safe alternative food preparations. A barbecue grill is an excellent way to prepare food, but a charcoal grill should never be used indoors. Always grill outside.
- Check on friends and relatives — especially children, seniors and those with medical conditions or disabilities. These people may need to seek emergency cooling shelters.
- Keep a first-aid kit in your home and one in your car. Make sure that it includes scissors, tweezers, safety pins, aspirin, eyewash and rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide.
- Close all drapes and blinds on the sunny side of your residence.
- Take your family and pets to a cool basement location if you have one. Also consider going to an air-conditioned public place during warmer daytime hours.

During an outage, Safe Electricity recommends turning off electrical appliances and unplugging major equipment, including air conditioning units, computers and televisions. This will help protect equipment that could be damaged by electrical surges and prevent circuit overloads when power is restored. Leave one light on to indicate that power has been restored. Wait a few minutes then turn on other appliances and equipment one at a time.

If you use a standby generator, make sure a transfer safety switch is used or connect the appliance(s) directly to the generator output through an isolated circuit before you operate it. This prevents electricity from traveling back through the power lines, what’s known as “back feed.”

“Back feed creates danger for anyone near lines, particularly crews working to restore power,” said Hall.

For more tips on electrical safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org. Safe Electricity is an electrical safety public awareness program created and supported by a coalition of several dozen organizations, including electric utilities, educators and other entities committed to promoting electrical safety.



Foods should stay safe in an unopened refrigerator up to four hours.

Clay County water update

Clay County Water (CCW) is beginning the construction of Phase 2. It includes parts of the following townships; S.E. Songer, North Harter, South Louisville and North Stanford. Tri S Excavators of Odin, Ill. is the contractor. Pipe is being delivered at this time and boring and trenching will soon follow.

Please contact us if you are interested in the water or have any questions.

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 Hemp-hill 662-4590, Bill Seelman 662-8479, Dwight Edgington 678-2782, Kevin Henry 618-838-6123, or Hank Hilmes 662-2388

Board meeting report

Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting
April 26, 2010

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

Introduced Board Member Neil Gould as Director of District I following the retirement of Howard Poehler.

Approved the minutes of the regular meeting held March 29, 2010.

Accepted 14 new members for service.

Canceled 13 members no longer receiving service.

Approved work orders in the amount of \$45,468.72.

Accepted the disbursement list for the month of March, 2010.

Approved the financial and maintenance reports for the month of March, 2010 as presented by Gen. Mgr. Meng along with "Managers Overview 4/26/2010."

Heard a report by Trustee Logan concerning the recent AIEC monthly Board meeting and Reviewed 2010-2011 prospective AIEC Budget.

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

After **Review and Discussion** of "Explanation of Options and

Term for the Payoff of Notes" and attached documents, Approved Proposal Rev. 1d as strategy for retirement of debts using funds returned by SIPC, as recommended by Gen. Mgr. Meng.

Reviewed, Discussed, and Approved Federated Rural Electric Insurance proposal.

Reminded of Nominating Committee's appointments at May meeting.

Discussed presentation of possible by-law changes to the members at the Annual Meeting in September.

Heard a report by Gen. Mgr. Meng regarding the Youth Day to Springfield, IL attended by Sarah Briscoe Flora High School, Morgan Healy North Clay High School, and Justin Brown Clay City High School.

Reviewed a Thank you card from the University of Illinois Extension Office for Clay Electric's contribution towards their Conservation Field Day event.

Disbursed a Letter to the Editor submitted by Leonard Hopkins of SIPC called "Are Greenhouse Gases Linked to Warmer Earth".

Discussed parking lot issues.

Informed of the recent semi-annual structural and dielectric testing done on all Cooperative Line trucks. All trucks passed inspections.

Approved a contribution to the AIEC Scholarship program.

Adjournment.

Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc.

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Office hours:
7:30 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.