

Norris Electric *News*

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

Plant trees out of harms way

Autumn is a great time to plant trees and shrubs because of cooler temperatures and adequate moisture to enter winter dormancy. If landscaping is on your fall home project list, Safe Electricity wants to ensure that you “plant the right tree in the right place.”

It is sad when large, beautiful trees grow into power lines. They just cannot co-exist. Remember Shawn Miller, young man who suffered severe electrical burns and loss of a hand while decorating outdoor trees with Christmas lights.

Miller's story was the focus of Safe Electricity's “Teach Learn Care TLC” campaign in 2009, as he shared his experience in hopes others could avoid similar accidents.

Trees growing near power lines have to be pruned to keep them out of the lines and it's far better to choose lower growing trees that won't grow to interfere with electric service. Before you plant, create a pro-active landscaping plan that utilizes smaller trees and shrubs near power lines and taller trees away from wires and poles.

Ground hugging shrubs and small trees that reach no more than 15 feet in height can be planted near overhead lines. Trees that mature within a 25 to 45 foot height should be planted no closer than 35 feet from the power line. Other trees that exceed 45 feet



in height should be planted no closer than 45 feet from the line.

In addition to overhead lines, buried power lines can also be a problem for trees and vice versa. If utility crews need access to the buried cable, the root system may suffer. Trees and shrubs should not be planted deliberately over an underground utility line.

Not only do trees add to the beauty of your landscape, they also help the environment by absorbing carbon dioxide and can also help improve energy efficiency. Three properly placed trees around a house can substantially reduce home energy consumption by shading roofs and walls by as much as 10 to 15 percent. Trees can be used to shade patios, reducing

the air temperature around your home and your air conditioning units, and reduce the velocity of winter wind striking your home.

In addition to helping your energy bill, trees and shrubs can help beautify your neighborhood and add up to 20 percent to the value of a typical home. But plant the right tree in the right place and visualize it when it is fully grown. While fast growing trees will reach a mature height sooner, their wood is softer and they are more susceptible to losing limbs in winds and ice storms.

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Renewable Energy

There has been a lot of talk about renewable energy. Congress is talking about a bill that might require a certain portion of a utility's energy to come from renewable energy sources. The most prevalent renewable energy sources are wind power, solar power and anaerobic digesters (making energy from animal wastes). Norris Electric is in favor of using more renewable energy sources. There are a lot of cases where some of these alternative energy sources are being installed where the payback is a LONG way out.

As the legislators move forward it appears that the cost of historical energy sources such as coal will increase in some fashion either by taxes, pollution control expenses or other methods. When that happens the renewable energy sources will be more economically attractive. In the meantime there are a lot of "contractors" or "engineers" that are marketing alternative methods of making energy where the savings may be misrepresented.

We do not want to debate the effectiveness of these other energy sources but want our members to make informed decisions. The desire to install renewable energy sources can counteract a decision that does not necessarily look like a good economic decision. If a decision is made to install "green" power to be politically correct or for a member to do their part in fighting global warming then the decision is great. If the decision to go "green" is economical then more thought should go into that decision. We think that some of the salesmen calling on our members are exaggerating the savings of some of these projects.

A member can call the cooperative any time and get the historical usage of their home or business. A quick calculation to see if the project



is even in the ballpark is to look at the last 12 months of energy charges from the cooperative. For instance, a typical home may average \$100 a month for electricity, or \$1,200 a year. What kind of payback would you like to see on your project? Let's assume that you would like to see a 15-year payback. Let's also assume that the best you could ever do is to replace ALL of your energy with your new project. That means that you would be saving \$1,200 a year or for 15 years, \$18,000.

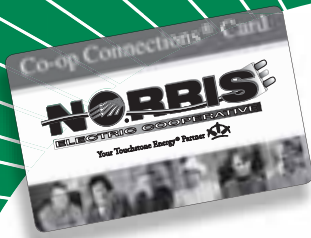
There are currently federal and state grants for these projects. So, if we assume that you could get a total of 50 percent in grants, then you

could spend \$9,000 and break even in 15 years. That may not be too bad for a renewable energy project. Of course, that is not including any loan interest of missed opportunities for investment of \$9,000. There may be other costs but just a simple calculation like this can at least determine if a project like this could be economically feasible.

So, if you want to install renewable energy sources we will help in any way that we can. Simply call our office at 877-783-8765. If you are installing a renewable energy source to eventually save money then be sure to crunch the numbers.

Did your PNG phone bill go up?

In the past, PNG charged the same rate for every long distance customer in Illinois. They have recently changed their rates to incorporate the costs of the individual local providers like Verizon, Frontier, ICTC, etc. Now there are different rates based upon your "home" telephone company. What this means is that some people have seen their PNG rates go up and other have seen a decrease. If you are one of the few that have gone up we have another option for you. Call Tami at 1-877-796-2333.



Co-op Connections Card Saving Members \$\$\$

Norris Electric Cooperative members saved 33.3 percent on prescriptions in June 2010 using their Co-Op Connections card. There were a total of 300 prescriptions filled at 30 different pharmacies for a total savings of \$5,413.

Vegetation Control Schedule

We will have crews performing routine tree trimming or spraying during **September** in the following areas:



Richland County
Cumberland County
Effingham County
Crawford County



These areas have been scheduled quite a bit in advance so our plans may change. You should call us if you have any questions relating to a specific area or our vegetation management policies and practices. You may also call us if you wish to make other arrangements for your specific property or to question our vegetation control practices. Our Forestry Department can be reached at 1-877-783-8765 or 618-783-8765 during working hours. Our website is www.norriselectric.com.

Campus Fire Safety – A lesson every college student should learn

As college and university students make their treks to campuses nationwide, whether into residence halls, apartments or fraternities, it is imperative that they first learn about electrical safety. As part of the “Teach Learn Care: TLC” campaign, Safe Electricity urges everyone to make sure their college bound students take precautions to prevent and protect themselves from campus-related fires and shocks.

Reports throughout the years of campus fires have been on the rise. Just like any other area, a campus is prone to a variety of violations. And dorm rooms are not immune. Oftentimes students innocently plug in all of the typical college tools – study lamps, laptops, TV’s, stereos, grooming and other electrical devices – unaware of the potential dangers. Rather than chance a mishap that could be avoided, be sure that your student is educated on safe appliance use and precautions against electrical hazards.

According to Campus Firewatch, the most common causes of student residence fires are due to “careless smoking, unattended candles and cooking, and overloaded extension cords and power outlets.”

“The limited number of electrical outlets in student rooms tempt many to use multiple extension cords and power strips, which can cause cords to overheat, creating shock and fire hazards,” warns Jay Solomon, Extension Engineering Educator and member of the Safe Electricity Advisory Board. “Student residences crammed with books, papers and bedding can allow the smallest spark to quickly become a blaze.”



Safety steps to prevent and reduce the risk of electrical fires in student housing include:

- Purchase and use only electrical appliances and power cords which have been tested by UL and other nationally recognized testing labs.
- Do not overload extension cords, power strips or outlets.
- Never use extension cords on a continuous basis; they serve as temporary solutions only.
- Use power strips with an over-current protector that will shut off power automatically if there is too much current being drawn.
- Never tack or nail an electrical cord to any surface, or run cords across traffic paths, under rugs or furniture.
- Use light bulbs with the correct wattage for lamps; if no indication is on the fixture, do not use a bulb with more than 60 watts. Check with your campus about possible restrictions regarding the use of halogen lamps. Always keep halogen lamps away from curtains, loose bedding, or other fabrics.
- Keep all electrical appliances and cords safely away from bedding, curtains and other flammable material.
- Make sure outlets around sinks are GFCI (ground-fault circuit interrupter) equipped. Test any GFCIs upon first use and monthly thereafter.

- Unplug small household appliances when not in use and all electronics when away for extended periods.

Older wiring in student housing and apartments may not be able to handle the increased electrical demand of today’s college student. If use of an appliance frequently causes power to trip off, or if its power cord or the outlet feels hot, disconnect the appliance immediately and report the condition to the landlord or campus housing staff.

A fire escape plan is essential. It is important that apartment and dorm residents know evacuation procedures and emergency exit locations in the event of a fire.

Emphasize to students that smoke detectors should never be disabled, nor should fire alarms ever be ignored or taken casually as a drill. If a fire alarm sounds, residents should calmly and quickly follow practiced procedures and immediately exit the building. Apartment and dorm doors should be closed behind to prevent fire spread.

“It is important to remind and stress to students that in the event of a fire, follow safety procedures and get out of harm’s way immediately,” remarked Solomon. “Property and valuables can be replaced, but lives cannot.”

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Office hours: 8 a.m. — 4:30 p.m