



Mike Smith
President and CEO



Coats for Kids

Another successful year of Coats for Kids is under our belt – our 13th year! When the temperatures started to drop in November, we geared up for our annual Coats for Kids program – providing brand new winter coats to elementary-age kids in our service territory. **647B6-275A**

We provided 258 coats to students at schools throughout our service territory. McDonough Power works with

staff at each school to determine their needs. Kids at Bushnell-Prairie City, Macomb, Monmouth, United, VIT and West Prairie schools benefitted from the donation this year. The program is funded by scrap metal sales as well as a matching grant from the CoBank Sharing Success Program. In the season of giving, we are thankful to be able to help the communities we serve!



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Why is my power out?

When power goes out, we are working hard to restore it

We hate it when the power goes out just as much as you do. When there is an outage, we work hard to resume service as quickly and safely as possible. Many times, the reasons for outages are beyond our control. Here are the main reasons the power goes out. **933B2-356B**

Storms

Conditions brought on by storms such as high winds, ice and lightning can interrupt service. Lightning itself does not impact outages as much as people think, but it can strike trees and cause branches or even whole trees to fall on distribution lines. Lightning can cause a problem, however, if it strikes substation equipment, such as a large transformer. Strong high winds and ice that accumulates on lines can also impact distribution.

Trees and vegetation

Branches, limbs or trunks can fall on lines, and vegetation (such as vines) can grow around poles, lines or other equipment. Ice and wind can make matters worse. This is why we work so hard to keep power lines and equipment clear.

Animals

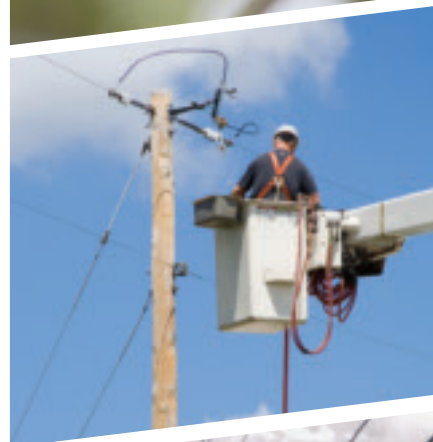
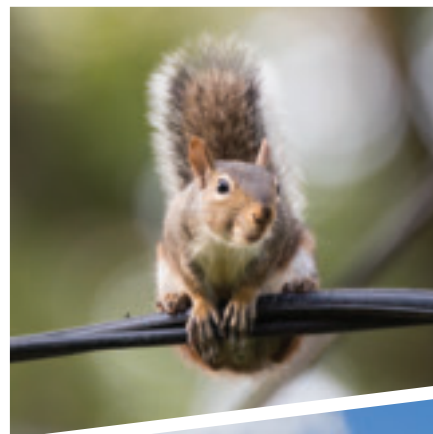
It is estimated that 11 percent of outages are caused by our furry friend the squirrel. They love to chew on the weatherproof coating around lines. Other critters like turkeys, snakes and raccoons can interfere with service too. A bird on a wire is harmless and safe for the bird as long as it touches the line and nothing else.

Accidents

Cars, trucks, mowers and farm equipment that have a run-in with a utility pole can cause an outage.

Public damage

Unsafe digging, equipment or line damage, vandalism, or theft can all cause interruptions in the energy chain.



Overload

This happens when demand spikes, such as when too many air conditioners run on a hot summer day, causing blackouts or brownouts.

Equipment issues

We maintain and inspect all our lines and equipment regularly; however, sometimes equipment malfunctions. We strive to address any problem as soon as it happens.

For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Three DIY efficiency projects to tackle this year

A New Year brings new opportunities to save energy—and money. You may think energy efficiency upgrades require a great deal of time and expense, but that's not always the case.

If you're interested in making your home more efficient but don't want to break the bank, there are several DIY projects you can tackle to increase energy savings. Let's look at three inexpensive efficiency upgrades that can help save energy throughout the year.

Trim dryer vent

Level of difficulty: easy. Supplies needed: tin snips, gloves, measuring tape and masking tape. Estimated cost: about \$25 depending on the supplies you already have. **8223B8-852A**

If your dryer vent hose is too long, your dryer is working harder than needed and using more energy than necessary. The vent hose should be long enough for you to pull the dryer out a couple feet from the wall, but the shape of the hose should form a line—it should not have a lot of slack, with twists and curves. A shorter, unobstructed vent hose increases the efficiency of your dryer, dries clothing faster and reduces lint buildup, which can create potential fire hazards.

Measure, mark and trim the hose to the desired length, then reattach the hose to your dryer and exterior vent. If you're unsure about the hose length, watch a tutorial video on YouTube.



Seal air leaks

Level of difficulty: moderate. Supplies needed: caulk and caulk gun, weather stripping, gloves, putty knife, paper towels. Estimated cost: \$25 to \$50 depending on the materials you purchase.

Sealing air leaks in your home can help save 10-20 percent on heating and cooling bills. Apply caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring and plumbing to seal in conditioned air. You should also weather strip exterior doors, which can keep out drafts and help control energy costs. Types of caulking and weather-stripping materials vary but ask your local hardware store for assistance if you're unsure about the supplies. For more info, the Department of Energy provides step-by-step instructions for caulking and weather stripping: <https://bit.ly/2Kesu6W>

Insulate attic stairs opening

Level of difficulty: moderate. Supplies needed (if you build the box yourself): rigid foam board, faced blanket insulation, tape for foam board,

measuring tape, utility knife, caulk and caulk gun, plywood. Estimated cost: \$50 to \$100.

A properly insulated attic is one of the best ways to optimize energy savings and comfort in your home, but many homeowners don't consider insulating the attic stairs, or the opening to your attic space. Even a well-insulated attic can leak air through the stair opening, but there's an easy fix.

An insulated cover box can seal and insulate the attic stairs opening. You can build your own insulated cover box or purchase a pre-built box or kit from a local home improvement store for about \$60. If you decide to build your own, check out these step-by-step instructions from the Department of Energy: <https://bit.ly/36YNCYQ>. It should also be noted, if your attic opening is in a garage that you do not heat and cool, this upgrade will not be as effective.

Saving energy doesn't have to be hard. With a little time and effort, you can maximize energy savings and increase the comfort of your home.

Youth to Washington Tour student wins scholarship

William Ornduff, a senior at United High School, was one of three winners of a \$1,000 scholarship from Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange. William was randomly selected from more than 1,800 students during Youth to Washington Tour in June.

William represented McDonough Power Cooperative during the tour and is pictured with President and CEO Mike Smith, Energy Services Manager Kelly Hamm and United High School Principal Amy Schmitz. Congratulations William!



Don't let old electrical wiring pose a problem

People who love older homes usually get drawn in by their grandeur. They see a Victorian home in the historic district and fall in love with its stately staircase and intricate architectural features. Once they sign on the dotted line, they painstakingly restore woodwork, make sure windows are in working order and tend to other repairs. One of the top priorities on their "To Do" list should be to get the electrical system inspected by a qualified electrician.

Just because the wiring in a home is old doesn't automatically mean there's a problem, but there could be. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), many older homes that still have outdated wiring can't handle the electrical load of today's modern appliances. That's not good because old, outdated wiring could pose a fire hazard.

As electrical components age or become overloaded, the system can

overheat and wear out insulation. This can lead to arcs (electrical discharge) and short circuits — the two main causes of home electrical wiring fires, according to the CPSC. In addition, old rubber wire insulation can become brittle and easily flake, leaving wires exposed. **6315SV38-708A**

Older wiring called knob and tube can be found in homes built around 1950 or earlier. If your electrical system was not thoroughly inspected when you bought it, or if it was inspected but it has been several years, have it inspected by an electrician to make sure it is safe and that it adequately meets the electrical needs of your home.

If your house was built between 1965 and 1973, it could be dangerous for another reason. Aluminum is great for cans, but not for wiring since it can overheat. Unfortunately, it was used in 2 million homes that were built during that time period.

Regardless of the age of your home, be sure to get any potentially dangerous wiring issues checked out by a professional, especially if:

- Your circuit breaker keeps tripping or fuses blow often
- You notice unusual power draws or dimming or flickering lights
- You see discolored (dark colored) outlets or switch plates or they are warm to the touch
- You notice unusual odors like a burning smell but can't find a source
- Your outlets only allow you to plug in a two-pronged plug (and not a three-pronged plug), which means they are not grounded
- You don't have ground-fault circuit interrupters near faucets or other sources of water in your home
- Your house was built more than 40 years ago

For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Let the sunshine in! For additional warmth, open drapes over windows that receive sunlight during the day. Close them at night, which can reduce heat loss from a warm room up to 10%.

Source: energy.gov



Every month we will have four map location numbers hidden throughout The Wire. If you find the map location number that corresponds to the one on your bill (found above the usage graph), call our office and identify your number and the page that it is on. If correct, you will win a \$10 credit on your next electric bill.