

POWERLINE

NEWSLETTER FOR CO-OP MEMBERS OF CORN BELT ENERGY



EDITION: MARCH 2023

Be prepared: Five tips to make your home more secure

These days, soaking in daily (or hourly) news can make the world feel like a scary place. We have home security systems, smart doorbells and smart locks, which are good things. At the other end of the spectrum, our close-knit communities can feel safe, which can lead to complacency. Many of us can recall growing up in a home where the doors were never locked, and it felt like everybody knew everybody.

In either case, assessing your home's overall security (or lack thereof) is a good idea. Here are five safety tips to help make your home more secure:

Assess entry points

Take a tour of the outside of your home and think like a burglar. Consider which windows and doors would be easy to break or climb through. Then, look through the windows and see if expensive items are on display. Make sure each window and door can lock and draw curtains or close blinds when you are not home.

Lock second-floor windows and doors

"Second-story men" are burglars who prefer to break into a home on an upper story because they know that most homeowners do not tend to lock upstairs windows and doors (e.g., the door off a deck). Be sure



to lock them before you leave. In addition, lock up any ladders you keep outside following:

Lock the door to the garage

Although it is easy to lock when you are inside your house but more of a pain to unlock when returning home, always lock the door between your garage and your home. Many people do not lock this door when they are away since the garage door is shut. However, a garage door is relatively easy to open. Home invaders can simply pry it open or use a factory-setting opener.

Update your garage code

Change your garage code at random intervals instead of on a predictable

schedule, such as when the clock changes due to daylight saving time. (Moving the clock up or back an hour is a great time to check the batteries in smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms, however.)

Do not forget sliding doors

A bar inserted at the base of a sliding door is an inexpensive safeguard. This ensures that sliding glass windows cannot be opened or jimmied without breaking the glass. This will frustrate invaders and the sound of breaking glass can buy you time to call for help.

Taking the time to think like a burglar and checking your home's entry points can help keep you and your family safe.



Can anyone trim trees near power lines?

The answer is no. Specialized tree trimmers, certified by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in utility clearance, are the only persons legally allowed to trim within 10 feet of power lines.

OSHA requires this certification because electricity is a serious and widespread hazard to tree workers. According to the Tree Care Industry Association, electricity is the leading cause of death in the tree care industry, causing about 15 percent of all industry fatalities. Tree care industry workers do not have to directly contact a power line to be electrocuted; about half of all electrocution fatalities are the result of indirect contact.

Qualified line-clearance trimmers must be specially trained in how to safely work in proximity to energized lines. They must understand how an electrical grid functions, the effects of tree growth patterns and tree damage and how to implement directional pruning, as required by the American National Standard for Arboricultural Operations' safety standards.

According to OSHA, the duties of line-clearance certified tree trimmers typically include the following

- Undergoing annual evaluations by licensed professionals to ensure continuous adherence to industry best practices.
- Requesting job briefings from employers and other crew members before starting a job or when environmental conditions change.
- Properly wearing approved personal protective equipment, including fall protection equipment when needed.
- Complying with material handling and mechanical equipment requirements.
- Working with a second line-clearance tree trimmer within voice range.
- Determining the voltages of lines before work begins or assuming that the line is operating at the highest possible voltage if it is not possible to determine voltage.
- Ensuring body parts and any ladders, platforms or aerial devices being used remain outside the minimum approach distance from any energized

equipment.

- Using only insulated tools and equipment to remove branches and limbs that are in contact with, or are within the minimum approach distance of, energized lines or equipment.
- Determining if weather conditions are no longer safe to work in, such as the presence of high winds, ice, thunder or lightning that would make the work hazardous.
- Beginning work on storm restoration efforts in the aftermath of a storm if they have been trained in the special hazards involved with this type of work.

Please contact Corn Belt Energy at 800-879-0339 if you have any questions regarding tree trimming.



HOW ELECTRICITY REACHES YOU

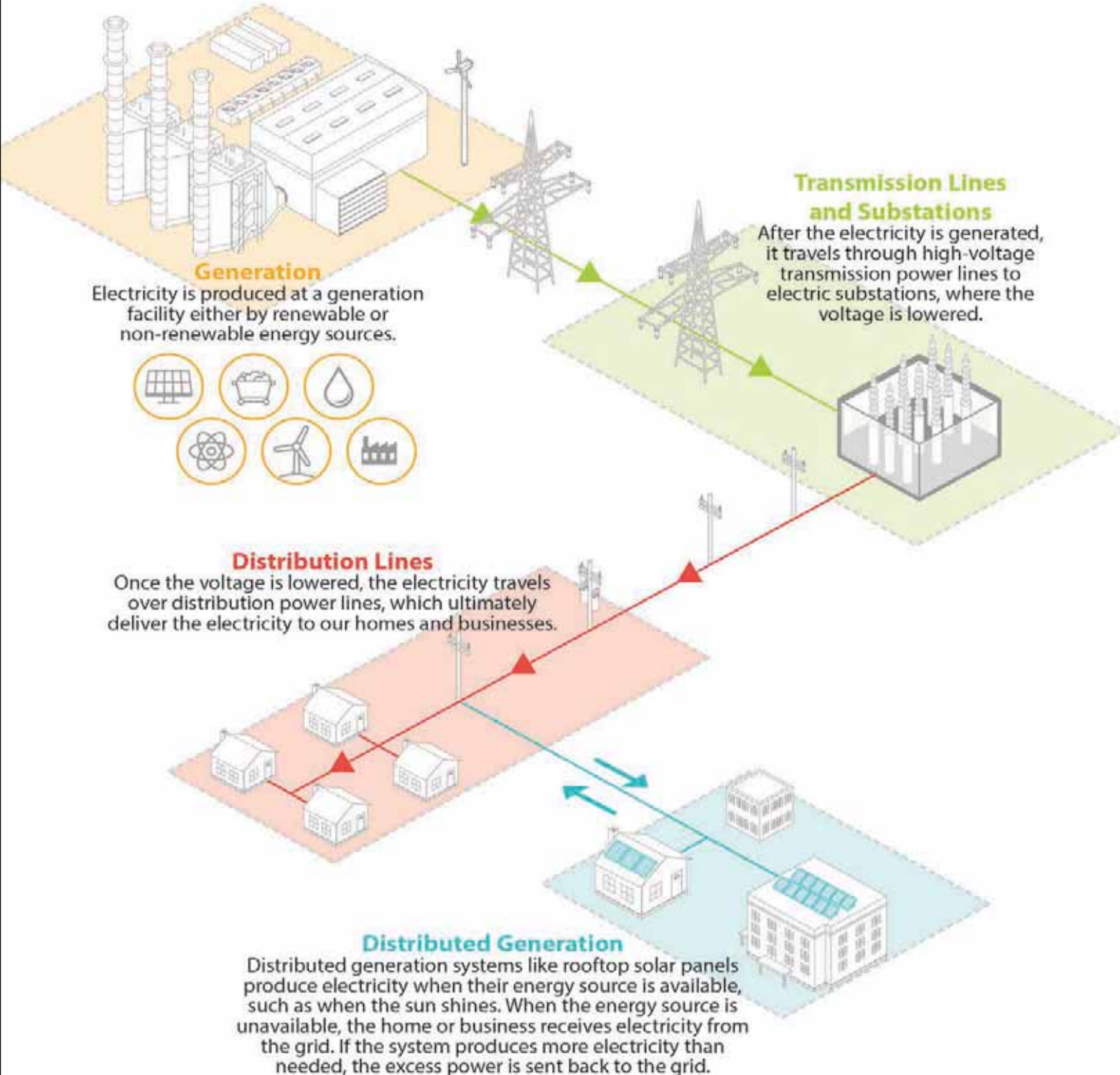




Photo courtesy of Honda

Play it safe when using portable generators

Storm season is upon us, which means greater potential for power outages. If you're planning to use a portable generator in the event of an outage, Corn Belt Energy wants to remind you to play it safe.

With proper use and maintenance, portable generators can provide great convenience during an outage. However, when generators are used incorrectly, they can be extremely hazardous.

Here are 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind when using portable generators:

1. **DO:** Install backup CO alarms.
2. **DO:** Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.
3. **DO:** Position generators at least 25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to enter the home.
4. **DO:** Ensure your generator is properly grounded. Use a portable ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to prevent electric shock injuries.
5. **DO:** Use three-pronged extension cords that are rated to handle the load of the generator. Inspect extension cords for cuts, frays or other damage before use.
6. **DON'T:** Operate a generator inside your home or an enclosed (or partially-enclosed) space. Generators produce high levels of CO, which can be deadly.
7. **DON'T:** Open windows or doors while the generator is running.
8. **DON'T:** Rely on generators as a full-time source of power. They should only be used temporarily or in emergency situations to power essential equipment or appliances.
9. **DON'T:** Overload generators. They should only be used to power essential equipment. Make sure your generator can handle the load of the items you plan to power.
10. **DON'T:** Connect generators directly into household wiring unless you have an appropriate transfer switch installed. If a generator is connected to a home's wiring without a transfer switch, power can backfeed along power lines and electrocute utility lineworkers making repairs.

If you have questions about proper use of portable generators, contact Corn Belt Energy at 800-879-0339.

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