


Norris Electric *News*

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

Co-op receives safety awards at state conference



Norris Electric Cooperative employees recently received two safety honors during the Safety/Supervisory Technical Conference held in Springfield. The awards were given to cooperatives with outstanding “no lost time” and “illness/injury” safety records for 2010. The conference is sponsored annually by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC). The theme of the conference was “Don’t Pass on Safety — Make it Your Goal.” Attendees learned seven principles to

help their organizations work toward a common vision for world-class safety performance. They also heard about the dangers of distracted driving and how new technology and social media can help them do their jobs more efficiently.

Shown with AIEC Manager of Lineworker and Apprentice Development Roger Larkin, right, is Norris Electric Cooperative Engineering Technician Jim Meyer.



Office Closing

**We will be closed
Monday, May 30th for
Memorial Day**

Appointment time-savers

You got places to go and people to see. And you can't afford to hang around waiting for an appointment to show up. Here are some tips for saving time:

- **Confirm your appointments the day before.** Let people know you're conscientious; they'll likely follow suit.
- **Don't arrive too early.** More than 10 minutes early is wasting time.
- **Bring some work with you.** If you must wait, it cuts down the wasted time if you bring something else you can work on in the meantime.
- **Set the appointment for an odd time.** Instead of 8 or 8:30, try 8:15 or 8:45. People will most likely do their best to make it on the dot.



Saving money



How to cut down on gasoline use this summer

Summer vacations are on the horizon, and chances are you'll be doing a lot more driving than usual. Save money, and help the environment, by reducing your gas consumption with these tips gathered from around the Web:

- **Use the right oil.** Check your owner's manual, or the manufacturer, for the recommended grade of motor oil. The wrong oil can negatively affect your vehicle's efficiency.
- **Lighten your load.** Remove unnecessary items from your trunk. The more weight you carry, the more fuel you'll burn.
- **Get rid of your roof rack.** If your vehicle sports a roof rack that you're not using, take it down. It increases wind resistance and cuts your efficiency.
- **Buy gas at the right time.** Evenings are better than hot afternoons for filling your tank. Gasoline is denser when temperatures are cool, so you'll get more for the same price.
- **Use your A/C wisely.** At high-way speeds, you're better off running your air conditioning than opening your windows and increasing drag. But when driving around town, keep your windows down and the air conditioner off to conserve fuel.

Tips for water conservation

Water covers the Earth, yet using it efficiently is more important than ever. You'll avoid wasting water (and energy) by following these simple tips:

- **Check your toilet.** Toilet leaks can waste a ridiculous amount of water. Place a few drops of food coloring in your tank, then check the bowl a half-hour later. If you see any color, you've got a leak that should be fixed.
- **Shut off your hose.** When watering your lawn or washing your car, use a nozzle you can shut off when you don't need it. Better yet, fill a bucket of water instead of running the hose constantly and you'll use less water.
- **Keep a pitcher of water in your fridge.** Don't run the faucet when you need a drink. A pitcher or bottle of water in the refrigerator will ensure that less water goes down the drain. If possible, try to use the same glass or cup all day long to cut down on the number of dishes that need washing.
- **Shorten your showers.** The average eight-minute shower can use up to 17 gallons of water. Trim your shower time to three or four minutes; some experts suggest turning water off while you lather up.

New rates coming

As mentioned at the Norris Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting, our wholesale power contract expires Dec. 31, 2012. We have timed the market extremely well in the past when we negotiated a wholesale power contract. We were able to sign a contract for a fixed rate when the market was down and the low rate was good for a number of years. The market is presently fluctuating a lot and trending up. Most of it is due to environmental concerns on one type or another. Looking at the future the Board of Directors determined that a contract based on the cost of making the electricity was better than the market-based price. Different vendors

were reviewed and the Board determined that Southern Illinois Power Cooperative in Marion, Ill. was the best cost-based electricity provider.

When reviewing the options they saw that the rates were going to go up dramatically no matter which vendor they chose but SIPC had the most attractive rates. A lot of what we see when we look forward is estimates and guesswork because we cannot tell what the legislators might decide to do on environmental issues. We don't know what fuel prices might do. Our best guess is that our wholesale rates will go up by about 40 percent from what we have been paying. Realizing that payroll, insurance and other costs

are part of our overall costs then the impact of a 40 percent wholesale rate would correlate to about a 32 percent retail rate increase.

The board realizes that this is a DRAMATIC increase and plans to spread this over a three-year period starting in January of 2012. As of now it would appear that the increase will be somewhere between 10-12 percent for 2012. As the time gets nearer the board might have a better idea of what the costs will be and the increase for 2012 will be able to be determined and finalized. Stay tuned for more information.

Take care when cleaning up broken CFLs

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) are more energy efficient than standard incandescent bulbs, which is important in these days of mounting concern about the environment. But they contain mercury (though incandescent bulbs contain more), and that mercury can be a health hazard if the bulb breaks. Take care cleaning up. Here's what to do:

- **Clear the room.** Get everyone out of the room immediately, especially children, pregnant women, and pets.
- **Ventilate the area.** Turn off any fans, air conditioning, or forced-air heating. Open the windows to let fresh air circulate in the room.
- **Wait before cleaning.** Stay out of the room for at least 15 minutes before beginning to clean up the area. Gather the supplies you'll need: disposable gloves, plastic zip-lock bags, a flashlight, duct tape, and some damp paper towels.
- **Gather debris carefully.** Wearing your disposable gloves, pick up all the larger pieces you can find and place them in a zip-

lock bag. Push tiny bits of glass or powder into piles using a piece of cardboard or stiff paper and place them into bags.

- **Be thorough.** Use a flashlight to locate tiny bits of glass or mercury. Pat the entire area with duct tape to pick up small traces of debris. Then use a damp paper towel to pat down the area once again.
- **Dispose of the material.** Put everything, including your gloves, into zip-lock plastic bags for immediate disposal. Check community regulations on disposing of CFLs.
- **Wash up.** Thoroughly wash your face and hands after you've finished cleaning.
- **Keep the air flowing.** Continue to ventilate the area for several hours. Use a portable fan to push air outside.
- **Vacuum with care.** When you do your next normal cleaning and vacuuming, keep children, pets, and pregnant women out of the area. Ventilate the room before



and after cleaning. If you vacuum, remove and dispose of the vacuum bag immediately. (If you use a bag-free vacuum, empty it out immediately into a plastic zip-lock bag, clean the interior surface with a damp cloth, and discard the cloth in the bag before disposal.)

Safe Electricity plants seeds of caution around power lines

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 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 subsoiling, call the utility locator service to mark underground utilities first.

Norris Electric Cooperative • 8543 N. State Highway 130 • Newton, Illinois 62448 • 618-783-8765
Office hours: 8 a.m. — 4:30 p.m