

Play It Safe with Power Lines



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER LEROY T. SKLOSS

I read a pretty amazing story the other day. It involved two teens in Indiana, Lee Whittaker and Ashley Taylor, who were driving down the road with some friends when their car started to fishtail. Lee did his best to keep the vehicle on the road. But before he knew it, he was sliding straight into a utility pole—and that pole came down, lines and all, right on top of his overturned car.

Now, most folks faced with this situation would do what comes naturally: Get out of the car. But Lee and Ashley knew better. Not a week earlier, they had attended a safety demonstration at their school sponsored by their local electric co-op. One of the key messages relayed was “stay in your car if it ever hits a power pole, where you’ll be safe from any electrical current.”

The two did just that and kept their friends in the car and family members at a safe distance once they arrived. As a result, the entire group walked away with just a few minor injuries. However, without basic knowledge of electrical safety, the outcome that night could have been much different.

The electricity Karnes Electric Cooperative provides day-in and day-out is a phenomenal resource, powering our modern lifestyles in a safe, reliable and affordable

way. But electricity must be respected. If safety isn’t made a priority, what changes our lives for the better could change them for the worse in an instant.

Lee and Ashley know this from experience, and we’re striving to keep you informed about electrical safety so you don’t have to learn a similar lesson the hard way.

Safety is a fundamental part of the culture at Karnes Electric Cooperative. Being an electric lineworker is ranked by the U.S. Department of



If your vehicle comes in contact with a power line, would you know what to do?

Labor as one of the country’s top 10 most dangerous jobs, on the same list as fishermen, loggers and military servicemen. We demand that not only those out in the field, but also employees at all levels make safety a top priority.

As part of our safety commitment, please take time to learn how you can be safe around electricity at home. Spending just a few minutes with some helpful resources can make all the difference when you’re faced with a potentially unsafe situation. For more information on electrical safety, please visit our website, at karnesec.org, as well as SafeElectricity.org and esfi.org.

I hope there won’t be any stories about Karnes Electric Cooperative members getting into sticky situations like Lee and Ashley did. But if there are, a few minutes spent studying safety today could ensure a happy ending.



Prevent Copper Thefts

As the price of copper has increased, so has the incidence of copper theft. While trying to make a quick dollar by stealing copper, thieves risk their own lives and cause dangerous and expensive damage. Common targets for copper thieves are farming equipment, air conditioners, vacant buildings, construction sites and electric utility properties, including substations and power poles.

Copper theft from electric utilities is particularly hazardous to thieves and also to those who rely on electricity. In the worst cases, copper thefts have caused fires and explosions that have taken innocent lives.

Safe Electricity suggests the following tips to stay safe and help stop copper theft:

- ▶ If you notice anything unusual with electric facilities, such as an open substation gate, open equipment, hanging wire, etc., contact your electric utility immediately.
- ▶ If you see suspicious activities near electric facilities, call emergency services or your local utility. Do not intervene. Allow officials to handle the situation.
- ▶ If you work in construction, store copper securely, especially overnight.
- ▶ Install motion-sensor lights on the outside of your house and business to deter possible thieves.
- ▶ Store tools and wire cutters in a secure location, and never leave them out while away.

For more information on staying safe around electricity, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Tame Your Trees

We love our trees, but when branches are too close to power lines, they can cause power outages, fire hazards and other safety concerns.

Here are some rules to follow:

- ▶ If a tree or a large branch is touching—or falls on—an electric line, call your electric cooperative immediately. Tree sap is an excellent conductor of electricity, so a downed branch on a line is an electrocution hazard as well as a fire hazard.
- ▶ Never trim trees that grow close to power lines; that is a job for professionals. Call your electric cooperative for assistance and guidance.
- ▶ Use extreme caution when doing any overhead trimming. Branches often fall in unexpected places.
- ▶ Don't allow children to climb trees or build tree houses close to power lines.
- ▶ Plant appropriate distances from all power lines—those along the street or right-of-way, as well as those running to your home and outbuildings.
- ▶ When planting a tree, plan ahead. A tiny tree may eventually grow large enough to damage power lines and possibly interrupt power during storms. At maturity, your trees should be at least 10 feet away from power lines.



NICOLAMARGARET IJSTOCK

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Leroy T. Skloss

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Main Office

1007 N. Highway 123, Karnes City

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1824 W. Goodwin, Pleasanton

Pay your bill, submit meter readings and view your account summary at karnesec.org.



Contact Us

For information and outages during office hours

(830) 780-3952 Karnes City
(830) 569-5538 Pleasanton
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To report a power outage after 5 p.m. and on weekends and holidays

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SAVE THE DATE!

KARNES EC

ANNUAL MEETING

Monday, June 2



Next month's issue will contain important information.

Keep Kids Safe Outdoors

Share these safety rules with youngsters before turning them loose outside

Summer vacation is about to begin for thousands of schoolchildren across the state. We all know that children love going outdoors to swim, fly kites, climb trees and play with their friends. Although playing outdoors can be a great pastime, there are electrical hazards that children need to be aware of to keep them safe. Safe Electricity offers a variety of tips to share with children before they head outdoors.

Make sure your children know these safety rules:

Stay away from pad-mounted transformers.

Pad-mounted transformers are green metal boxes that contain the above-ground portion of an underground electrical installation. These cabinets carry high voltages and are safe when locked, but they can be deadly if someone reaches inside. If you see

one in your neighborhood that is open, call authorities and Karnes Electric Cooperative immediately.

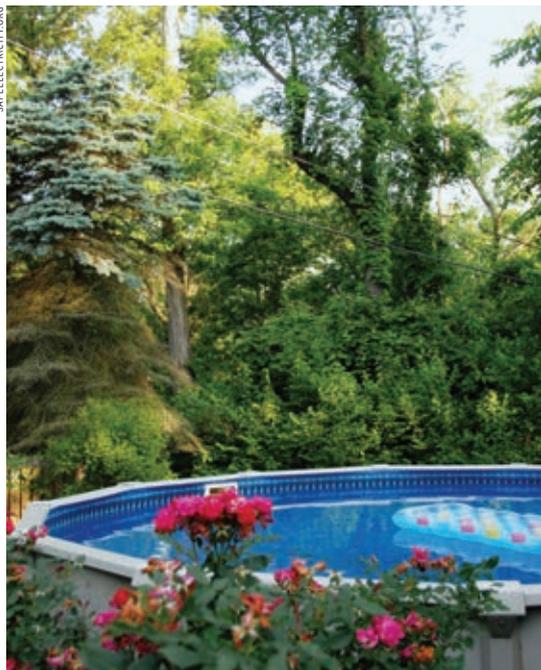
Never enter an electrical substation for any reason.

If a ball or other toy enters the fence surrounding the substation, call Karnes EC for help. Substations hold deadly amounts of electricity and should be entered only by professionals.

Always be aware of overhead power lines.

Do not fly kites or model planes near power lines or electrical substations. A kite string can conduct electricity from an overhead line directly to the person on the ground.

Be careful when using Mylar balloons for a party. These metallic balloons con-



Be careful of nearby overhead lines when using long-handled tools like pool skimmers.

duct electricity, so never tie one to a child. If the balloon comes into contact with electricity, the child could receive a fatal shock.

Ensure that your children are protected from the electrical service connection to your home. Keep ladders or long poles stowed and away from youngsters who might be tempted to use them to reach the wires connected to your house. Also be aware of these lines around pools. Pool skimmers can be long enough to reach service connection lines.

Never climb trees near power lines.

If branches are touching the wires, the tree could be energized. Even branches not touching power lines could become energized if a child's weight is added.

If you hear thunder, go inside.

Finally, storm fronts can move rapidly, and lightning can strike 10 miles in advance of a storm. Remember this rule from the National Weather Service: When thunder roars, go indoors. Make sure kids know that it is not safe to be outside during a storm.

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



May Is Electrical Safety Month

Folks who work with electricity are acutely aware of the need for safety at all times, but the general public may not have that same level of awareness. That is the impetus behind May being Electrical Safety Month.

Karnes Electric Cooperative urges you to be aware of the dangers of electricity and to use the greatest care and safety when working with or near electricity.

- ▶ When trimming trees or working on your home, we all need to know where the electric wires and equipment are and how we can work safely around them. Don't take unnecessary risks. If necessary, call a licensed contractor or electrician.

- ▶ Teach children to stay away from such electric facilities as substations, transmission towers and transformers.

- ▶ Remember that electricity can move through conductive materials, i.e., water, metal, wood, aluminum, string and plastics.

- ▶ Put childproof covers on all outlets that children or pets can reach. Any outlets located outdoors, or in moisture-containing areas such as the kitchen, bathroom or garage, should have ground-fault circuit interrupters.

- ▶ Check extension cords for wear and tear and replace any that are cut or frayed. Use extension cords that are rated for the type of work you will be doing. (You can rub extension cords with a bar of soap to prevent pets from chewing on them.)

May is National Electrical Safety Month, but the focus on electrical safety should continue year-round.

J. ANTHONY MARTINEZ | ISTOCK | THINKSTOCK

Wisely Use That Window Unit

No central air conditioning? No problem! Your window or room air conditioner doesn't have to be an energy hog. Follow these energy tips when using your window unit, and say goodbye to higher bills.

Purchase an Energy Star model. Energy Star room air conditioners cost at least 10 percent less to operate than conventional models.

Use a timer. Set the plug-in timer to turn off the air conditioner when you leave home and to turn it on just before you return.

Purchase a unit with varying fan speeds. Use a room air conditioner with fan speed control. This allows faster cooling when needed and quieter, more efficient operation at other times.

Keep the unit centrally located. To allow better air circulation, install your room air conditioner in the window or area of the wall that is nearest to the middle of the space being cooled.

Seal the unit. Once a room air conditioner is in place, seal the space around it to prevent warm outside air from leaking in.

Don't set the thermostat at high initially. When you first turn on your room air conditioner, set the thermostat at normal or medium. Setting it any colder won't cool the room any faster.

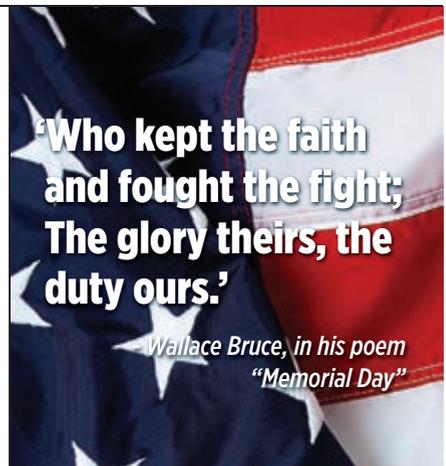
Keep the unit out of the sun. Locate your room air conditioner on the shady side of your home. It will operate more efficiently in a cooler location.

Close the fresh-air vent. Make sure the fresh-air vent is closed when the room air conditioner is operating so you aren't cooling outside air. Open the vent when the outside air is cooler to let in fresh air.

Remove the unit at the end of the cooling season. Take your room air conditioner out of the window when the cooling season is over. If you must leave the unit in place, cover the outside of the unit with a weatherproof cover and fill any cracks around the unit with removable caulk.



Buying an Energy Star window air conditioner will save you money on your energy bill each month.



**'Who kept the faith
and fought the fight;
The glory theirs, the
duty ours.'**

*Wallace Bruce, in his poem
"Memorial Day"*

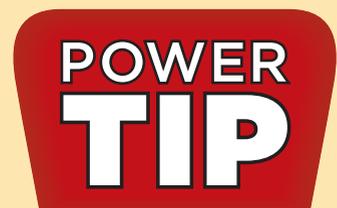
**Karnes Electric Cooperative
salutes the men and women
who have paid the ultimate
price to secure the freedoms
we enjoy today.**



*Our offices will be closed
Monday, May 26, in observance
of Memorial Day.*

*As always, personnel are on
standby in case of an outage.*

PHOTO: JON HELGASON | ISTOCK | THINKSTOCK



Save ENERGY • Save MONEY

Maintain your water heater to save money

Drain a quart of water from your water heater's tank every three months to remove sediment that impedes heat transfer and lowers its efficiency. Follow the manufacturer's directions to perform the task.

Source: energysavers.gov

Be Safe Around the Water

In the heat of summer, cool respite can be found in lakes and pools. Keep safety in mind while enjoying the water. Drowning is not the only danger associated with water recreation.

May is National Water Safety Month. Take the time to make sure you and your family will be safe this summer.

Swimming safety

- ▶ Teach children water safety and swimming skills as early as possible.
- ▶ Appoint a “designated watcher” to monitor children during social gatherings at or near pools.
- ▶ Keep a first-aid kit poolside. Post CPR instructions and learn the procedures.



Monitor children closely at lake and poolside parties.

- ▶ Keep rescue equipment poolside. Don't wait for the paramedics to arrive because you will lose valuable lifesaving seconds. Four to six minutes without oxygen can cause permanent brain damage or death.
- ▶ Install four-sided isolation fencing, at least 5 feet high, equipped with self-closing and self-latching gates, that

completely surrounds the pool and prevents direct access from the house and yard.

- ▶ Maintain constant visual contact with children in a pool or pool area. If a child is missing, check the pool first; seconds count in preventing death or disability.
- ▶ Don't think you'll hear a child who's in trouble in the water; a child drowning can be silent, with no splashing to alert anyone that the child is in trouble.

Boats and docks

Boat and dock owners should have electrical systems checked and repaired to help prevent water electrocution accidents. Exposure to the elements and water movement can degrade the condition of electrical wires and components, allowing electricity to leak into the water or energize surrounding metal.

Each year, people are killed by electrical shock while in the water near docks or boats plugged into shore power. Proper maintenance and safety equipment is vital to help prevent these tragedies.

Have your boat's electrical system checked at least once a year. Boats should also be checked when something is added to or removed from their systems.

Electrical safety

Drowning isn't the only danger pools pose. Electrical hazards could also exist. Take the necessary steps to make sure everything is safe around your pool.

Homeowners should make sure that the National Electric Code, or NEC, has been followed for wiring and that ground-fault circuit interrupters are properly installed on equipment in areas around pools, spas and hot tubs.

- ▶ Know where electrical switches and circuit breakers are for pool, hot tub and spa equipment. Know how to operate them.
- ▶ Refrain from swimming if you hear thunder. Wait until well after a storm passes to get into the water.
- ▶ Make sure all electrical wires and junction boxes are at least 5 feet away from water as required by the NEC.
- ▶ Ensure that overhead power lines and junction boxes are safely positioned and have the proper NEC-recommended clearance when installing a new pool, hot tub or spa.
- ▶ When cleaning a pool, know where any overhead power lines are to avoid making contact with them while using long-handled tools.
- ▶ Use battery-powered appliances and electronics around the pool instead of connecting them to an extension cord.
- ▶ Post an emergency plan in plain view in the pool area with instructions on how to assist someone who is suffering an electrical shock.

Sources: nationalwatersafetymonth.org; SafeElectricity.org



DANIEL CIMLA/AMERICAN RED CROSS

Keep your energy needs in mind when shopping for a home generator.

Use Generators Safely

When weather forecasters predict a stormy spring, it might be time to think about backing up your co-op-delivered electricity with a home generator.

Generators come in two styles: portable and permanent.

Small portable generators that cost a few hundred dollars typically can power a few appliances at a time—such as a small refrigerator, TV or hair dryer. Larger portable generators can keep the TV, water heater and sump pump running if you lose electricity during a storm.

Inverter generators, which are portable but cost about three times more than the standard model, are designed to run sensitive electronic equipment, such as computers and home theater equipment.

Permanent, standby generators cost a few thousand dollars, but they can run large appliances. Larger ones can run all of a home's electrical devices, including the air-conditioning system, while you're waiting for power to be restored.

Most permanent generators are connected to the home's power supply through the electrical panel and will automatically turn on when the lights go out.

A caution: A qualified electrician is the only one who should connect a generator to your home's electrical panel. If installed incorrectly, the switch that makes the connection can backfeed electricity into a "dead" power line, and anyone who is touching the line—such as Karnes Electric Cooperative personnel working to restore power—could get electrocuted.

If you use a portable generator, the same caution applies: Never connect the generator to your home's wiring system, which can backfeed to main distribution lines. Instead, plug individual appliances into it.

Also, operate generators well away from living spaces with plenty of open area around it. Generators and other gasoline-powered appliances give off carbon monoxide, a deadly gas, as part of operation.

Don't wait until the power goes out to decide which kind of generator you need. If you do, you'll probably wind up with the only unit that's left on the store's shelves during the middle of a storm—and you won't get what you really need.



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Call **800.699.4832** or visit **www.karnesec.net** to get connected today.

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