Look Sharp for Safety

MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER BRAD BIERSTEDT

WE ALL WANT THE BEST FOR the people in our lives—our family, friends, community and others. At Karnes Electric Cooperative, that includes you, our members.

It's why we make safety a top priority, and why we devote time and energy to making our staff and community residents aware of how to stay safe around electricity. Our modern way of life depends on this resource, but electricity can be dangerous or even deadly, so we encourage everyone to know how to use electricity safely.

For instance, if you're working with tall ladders—cleaning gutters, trimming trees or undertaking other projects outside—we remind you to look up and stay a safe distance away from overhead power lines, especially those connected to your home.

If a project involves digging, be sure to call 811 a few working days in advance to have your underground utility lines marked before you put shovel to the ground. This will keep you from damaging any electric, gas, water, cable, sewer or other lines that are buried on your property. One phone call could prevent inconvenient outages and possible injury.

DIMITRY NAUMOID | ISTOCK.COM

Climbing trees can be irresistible to children, so be sure they know to check for power lines before climbing.

Help children understand the importance of staying away from electric utility equipment. Teach them never to climb trees or fly kites near power lines.

Know how to prepare for and stay safe during and after storms and natural disasters that could leave behind electrical hazards, such as downed power lines and submerged electrical devices.

We don't want anyone to take a chance that could end in tragedy. We encourage you to visit SafeElectricity.org, where you'll find lifesaving information presented in videos, interactive games for children, online teaching resources and much more.

The United States has the safest, most reliable electric system in the world, and with it comes extensive responsibility. Cooperatives value our members' safety and well-being, and Karnes EC will continue working to educate everyone on important safety considerations.

THOMAS ABRAHAM | ISTOCK.COM

Want a quick and easy way to save energy? Just unplug electronics when not in use.

Five Little-Known Ways To Save

1. Every night before you go to bed, walk through the house and turn off electric appliances and equipment that you usually leave on overnight, even though you don't use it. Examples: Unplug your cable box, your phone chargers if they're not in use, and your TV set.
2. Unplug your wireless router before you go to work in the morning, leave the house for an extended time or turn in for the night. It doesn't need to run when it's not in use. A simple way to do this: Plug your computer, router, external hard drive and printer into a single, surge-protected power strip, and just flip one switch.
3. If you iron, save all your ironing for once a week. Turn the iron to its hottest setting and iron denim and cotton first; then reduce the setting for linens and delicates.
4. Stop washing your dishes by hand. Your dishwasher uses less heated water than you do. Also stop prewashing. It's not necessary, and Consumer Reports says it wastes up to 20 gallons of hot water every day.
5. Fill your refrigerator and freezer. Every time you open the appliance's door, you let warm air in. If there's not much empty space in there, the warm air can't circulate. This means the device doesn't have to work as hard to keep your food and liquids cold.

Karnes EC To Award College Scholarships

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS are available through Karnes Electric Cooperative as the board of directors approved granting 10 $1,500 scholarships this year.

The cooperative has been able to award scholarships for many years through a law enacted September 1, 1997. HB 3203 allows nonprofit electric cooperatives to put unclaimed funds previously collected by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts for the state's general fund to use for student scholarships.

The Karnes Electric Cooperative scholarships will be awarded to a graduating high school seniors who are legal dependents of active members receiving electric service from the cooperative.

Applications will be available in a PDF format on the Karnes Electric website, karnesec.org, and from high school counselors at all schools in the Karnes EC service area. Applications must be received by the main office in Karnes City by 5 p.m., April 1. Applications received after April 1 will not be eligible. Awards will be announced within 60 days of this date.

Karnes EC is excited to be able to provide these scholarships. Please check with your school counselor if you or someone you know is interested and meets the qualifications. If you need additional information, you may contact our main office at (830) 780-3952 and ask to speak to Janet Scheffler or Barbara Kotzur, or email bkotzur@karnesec.org.

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Karnes Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 7, Karnes City, TX 78118

GENERAL MANAGER

Brad Bierstedt

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COOPERATIVE OFFICES

Main Office
1007 N. Highway 123, Karnes City

District Office
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
1-888-807-3952 Toll-free

To report a power outage after 5 p.m. and on weekends and holidays

(830) 780-3952
Coy City, Ecleto, Floresville, Gillette, Goliad, Karnes City, Kenedy, Runge, Three Rivers, Tilden and surrounding areas

(830) 569-5538
Charlotte, Christine, Pleasanton, Poteet, Verdi and surrounding areas

FIND US ON THE WEB
karnesec.org

Win a Trip to the U.S. Capital

It's Youth Tour time again!

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES SEND HUNDREDS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS from around the country to Washington, D.C., annually for the Government-in-Action Youth Tour.

The winner of the Karnes Electric Cooperative Youth Tour Essay Contest will receive a travel package valued at $2,725 to join other Texas high school students to see the White House, the U.S. House and Senate chambers, the Supreme Court, Washington National Cathedral, Arlington National Cemetery, the Smithsonian Institution and many other important national sites. The travel package includes air transportation to and from Washington, D.C., hotels, meals, entrance fees and $250 cash for miscellaneous expenses.

The 2016 Youth Tour begins in Austin on June 8 and returns to Austin on June 17. This year, to give participants a snapshot of state government in action, a day of the trip will include a tour of the Texas State Capitol and a visit to the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum.

Applicants must be high school students who have completed their sophomore year by the end of June and be a member or the legal dependent of any member of Karnes EC.

Anyone wanting complete information may contact Janet Scheffler at (830) 780-3952. Applications can be picked up at any Karnes Electric Cooperative office or requested via jscheffler@karnesec.org. Deadline for application is 5 p.m., February 12.

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NRECA

Valentine balloons and power lines are likely to create an unromantic outage.

Heart-Shaped Balloons?

Keep metallic balloons away from power lines

IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE in love this Valentine's Day, shout it from the rooftops; take out a full-page ad in the local newspaper; post it on Facebook for everyone to see. But whatever you do, don't show your love by releasing a bunch of heart-shaped balloons into the sky.

Runaway balloons—especially those with metallic content—too often come into contact with overhead power lines. When they do, they can cause a temporary power outage. Hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses lose their power every year when helium-filled foil balloons drift into power lines.

The balloon's metallic coating can conduct electricity. So when the balloon touches a wire, it can start a fire or create an electrical surge. Either way, power in the neighborhood goes out, home electronics are at risk and the electric cooperative's property is damaged.

If you must take balloons outdoors, secure them with weights so they won't get loose. Don't take them near overhead power lines or deliberately set them free to float through the sky.

If a balloon does get stuck in a power line, do not try to retrieve it yourself. Instead, call your electric cooperative and report it.

You might not be using your pool or hot tub this time of year, but that doesn't mean they aren't affecting your electric bill.

How To Halt High Bill Culprits

IN OUR QUEST TO PROVIDE the best possible service to members, Karnes Electric Cooperative employees often need to wear many hats, so to speak. If a member's bill spikes significantly and he or she calls the co-op for guidance, our "investigator" hats go on to help find the culprit and solve the member's high electricity-use woes. Here are some offenders frequently found in the process.

Space Heaters

Expensive to run anytime, space heaters in "emergency use" during the coldest times create even greater expense. Members sometimes run space heaters in greenhouses or well houses, or in garages to warm pets. Because these areas are uninsulated, heaters run constantly—and because they're out of sight, they're out of mind.

A much better choice for efficiency is to use a 200-watt heat lamp instead of a 1,500-watt space heater, knocking down costs of 16.5 cents per hour to about 2.2 cents an hour; that's almost $4 a day versus about 53 cents a day.

Heat Pumps

Members with heat pumps sometimes select the wrong settings. A heat pump typically has settings for cool, off, heat and emergency heat. When cold weather arrives, members can mistakenly slide the selector all the way across to emergency heat, instead of the regular heat setting. This turns off the blower and turns on heat strips, using three times the regular amount of electricity.

Also, having strip heat without a heat pump can be costly. An air conditioner uses 48–50 cents an hour, but a heater uses $1–$1.50 an hour. Because many people believe it costs more to cool in summer than to heat in winter, they are shocked by the price difference.

Co-op inspectors also uncover outside HVAC unit problems, such as when the fan quits working or the unit gets stuck in the defrost cycle. When either happens, the heat strips run nonstop.

Thermostats

Co-op employees often discover a heat pump thermostat installed on a strip heat system. This causes the heating and air-conditioning units to run simultaneously, doubling or even tripling electric bills.

Other Miscellaneous Energy-Wasters

Dog/cat doors: These are simply big holes that let out expensive heated or cooled air.

Block heaters: Used for warming diesel truck engines, tractors and 18-wheeler engines, these units usually draw 1,000 watts and run constantly until unplugged.

Pool pumps: The factory setting on most pool pump thermostats is usually around 38 degrees, so the pump comes on more frequently in winter to keep from freezing. Many people leave these on all winter, driving bills up.

Hot-water leaks: Water heaters have a pop-off valve to reduce pressure. If the water line near that valve is hot, the water heater is continuously (and needlessly) releasing water then refilling and heating more.

Uninsulated water heater: Members often put their water heaters in an uninsulated area, like an attic or outside building. If the water heater tries to heat water to 120 degrees while the air around it is at 30 degrees, it must work constantly.

Temperature Difference Is the Key

To understand what creates high winter bills, remember that a major factor in home energy use is the difference between the outside temperature and the desired inside temperature. If it's 98 degrees outside and you try to cool to 78, that's a 20-degree difference. But if it's 30 degrees outside and you want to heat to 68 degrees, that's almost a 40-degree change. In the latter example, your unit works harder, using more energy.

All of us at Karnes EC want to help members detect the causes of high bills and provide the knowledge to prevent them. If you need help or have any questions about your electric bill, please call us at 1-888-807-3952.

LEEKRIS | DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB

Safety Essentials for Your Home

MAKE SURE YOUR FAMILY IS SAFE FROM ELECTRICAL DANGERS. Safe Electricity provides a checklist of basic electric safety essentials to help you keep your home safe from electrical fire and shock hazards:

Check outlets for loose-fitting plugs. Replace missing or broken wall plates so wiring and components are not exposed. If you have young children at home, install tamper-resistant outlets or cover unused outlets with plastic safety caps.

Never force plugs into outlets. Do not remove the grounding pin to make a three-prong plug fit a two-prong outlet. Avoid overloading outlets with adapters and too many appliance plugs.

Make sure cords are not frayed or cracked, placed under carpets or rugs, or located in high-traffic areas. Do not nail or staple them to walls, floors or other objects.

Use extension cords only on a temporary basis—not as permanent household wiring. Make sure they have safety closures to protect children from shock and mouth burns.

Check wattage to make sure that lightbulbs match the fixture requirements. Replace bulbs that have higher wattage ratings than recommended. Screw bulbs in securely so they do not overheat.

SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

Just because there are enough outlets, doesn't mean there's enough amperage to safely power everything. Be careful not to overload circuits.

Make sure outlets near water are equipped with ground-fault circuit interrupters. Critical areas include the kitchen, bathrooms, laundry, basement, garage and outdoors. Test these outlets monthly to ensure that they are working properly.

Make sure fuses are properly sized for the circuit they are protecting. If you do not know the correct rating, have an electrician identify and label the correct size to be used. Always replace a fuse with the same size you are removing.

If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker or gives you an electrical shock, immediately unplug it and have it repaired or replaced. Look for cracks or damage in wiring and connectors. Use surge protectors to protect electronics.

Check periodically for loose wall receptacles, wires or loose lighting fixtures. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind walls. Immediately shut off then professionally replace light switches that are hot to the touch and lights that spark or flicker.

As you continue to upgrade your home with more lighting, appliances and electronics, your home's service capacity may become overburdened. If fuses blow or trip frequently, have a professional determine the appropriate service requirements for your home.

Helping Others Means Safety First

GOOD SAMARITANS ARE CHARACTERIZED AS PEOPLE who have the desire to help those in need. Knowing how best to help in an emergency situation can make the difference between life and death—for the victim and the Good Samaritan.

Electricity can be an unforeseen hazard, particularly when overhead power lines have fallen and made contact with vehicles, the ground or anything else that conducts electricity. The wire does not have to be sparking or arcing to be live. Always assume a power line is energized, and never touch or approach it.

If you come upon an accident scene involving a vehicle and downed lines, stay back and warn others to stay away. Make sure the occupants of the car stay inside the vehicle until the utility has de-energized the lines.

In a rare circumstance, the vehicle may catch fire. The only way the occupants can safely exit is to jump free and clear without touching the vehicle and ground at the same time. Advise them to jump and land with feet together, then hop away to safety. Looking silly may save their lives.

If you encounter any other accident situation in which you believe someone is in contact with electricity or has just suffered an electrical shock, here are some additional tips:

- Look first. Do NOT touch. The person may still be in contact with the electrical source and be energized. If there are others nearby, make sure they do not touch the person, either.
- Call or have someone nearby call 911 and the electric utility.
- Turn off the source of electricity (i.e., circuit breaker or box)—if known and if safely possible. If you are not sure, wait for help from the emergency responders.
- Only once the source of electricity is off, check for signs of circulation (breathing, coughing or movement). Provide any necessary first aid.
- Prevent shock. Lay the person down and, if possible, position the head slightly lower than the trunk of the body, with the legs elevated.
- Do not move a person with an electrical injury unless the person is in immediate danger.

Anyone who has come into contact with electricity should see a doctor to check for internal injuries, even if he or she has no obvious signs or symptoms.

If you come across an accident involving a power pole or downed lines, call 911 immediately and do not touch the vehicle, lines or pole—or anything in contact with them.

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RECIPE OF THE MONTH

STEPAN POPOV | ISTOCK.COM

Cheesecake With Dark Chocolate

CRUST

1 cup crushed nuts (macadamias or walnuts work best)
1 cup flour
¼ cup brown sugar
½ cup butter (1 stick), softened

1. Combine all ingredients and press into 9-by-9-inch baking dish. Bake 30 minutes at 325 degrees, then cool.

FILLING

1 cup heavy cream
1 package cream cheese (8 ounces)
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 squares dark baking chocolate

1. With an electric mixer, whip the heavy cream until it thickens.
2. In a separate bowl, combine cream cheese, sugar and vanilla. Fold whipped cream into cream cheese mixture.
3. Grate dark chocolate into mixture, reserving some for topping.
4. Spoon mixture over crust, smooth with back of spoon and top with reserved grated chocolate.
5. Refrigerate 1 hour before serving.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at
TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM