



Please join us for our annual

# Member Appreciation Day

8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Wednesday, December 12, 2012

at our

Higginsville and Oak Grove offices

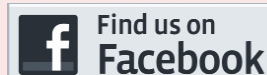
\*Visit our offices and register to win a \$25 energy credit for your  
January 2013 electric bill!  
(Four certificates will be given away at each office.)





A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

# West Central *Electric News*



West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. ~ Serving our members' needs since 1939

## Slick roads are on the horizon

Make sure you know what to do if your vehicle ends up under a downed power line this winter

It can happen in a split second. Your car slides on an icy road and ends up in the ditch near a power pole with the power line down across your vehicle.

Although your first instinct may be to get out of the situation as quickly as possible, you are safer to stay in the vehicle as long as it is not on fire, says West Central Electric Line Superintendent Randy Burkeybile.

If you find yourself in this situation, it is safe to use your cell phone to call for help. Make sure to let the 911 dispatcher know that a power line is down and could be live. Also warn any rescuers or first responders to the scene that there is a potentially live power line down.

If the vehicle is on fire, however, and you must get out, there are a few simple steps to remember to ensure your exit is as safe as possible.

**1. Exit the vehicle** as far away from the power line as possible. If the power line is lying across the hood, exit the back of the vehicle through a back door or a hatch.

**2. Carefully open the door** or hatch, cross your arms in front of you, and jump as far away from the vehicle as possible. **DO NOT** touch any part of the



**MAKING CONTACT...**All that is left of this tractor and mower is a burned-up shell after coming into contact with a West Central Electric Cooperative power line. Fortunately there were no injuries.

vehicle while jumping or after you have landed. Doing so can create a complete circuit, giving the electricity a path to the ground and electrocuting you.

**3. Once you land, DO NOT** pick up your feet and walk away. Shuffle them along the ground in small, baby steps without picking them up and without

leaving space between your feet. If you fall, don't try to get up on your hands and knees. roll away instead.

"The one thing you want to remember is that touching the vehicle and the ground at the same time, or even getting close, can create a complete circuit and electrocute you," Burkeybile said.

This is important advice to remember whether you are in a motor vehicle, or a piece of farm machinery. Mowers, augers and other equipment could become entangled in power lines and create a similar situation.

"This summer there was an incident on WCE's lines in which a mower hit a power pole, causing the line to fall down onto the tractor," Burkeybile said. "Fortunately, nobody was hurt, and the driver was able to get off the tractor safely. It was a situation that could have had a very different ending."



**DANGEROUS SITUATION...**(Above) The arm of the mower which cut the power pole, causing the line to fall down onto the tractor and catch fire. (Left photo) The remains of the burned-up transformer pole.

**Headquarters:**

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1-660-584-2131 or 1-800-491-3803

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Oak Grove, MO 64075  
1-816-625-8211

**Website:**

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**24-Hour Number:**

1-800-491-3803

**General Manager:**

Mike Gray

**Board of Directors:**

Clark Bredehoeft, President  
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Stan Rhodes, Asst. Sect.  
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Max Swisegood, Director  
Densil Allen, Director  
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*Watch for details about these important programs coming soon in the pages of West Central Electric News:*

- 2013 Rural Electric Youth Tour
- John & Kathryn English Memorial Scholarship Trust
- West Central Electric Cooperative Scholarship
- WCE & Linn State Technical College Electrical Distribution Systems Scholarship Program



**40 YEARS OF 4-H...**West Central Electric Member Services Advisor Anne Patrick was recognized as a 40-year leader at the 2012 Johnson County 4-H Recognition Banquet. Anne has worked with members of the Mt. Moriah Hustlers and also as a member of the Small Animal Committee for the Johnson County 4-H and FFA Fair. Incidentally, The Mt. Moriah Hustlers was the 4-H club Anne belonged to when she was a young 4-H member.

## Holiday energy savings

# Out with holiday hassles, in with energy efficiency

Time for the most dreaded annual rite of holiday decorating: stringing lights on your tree and house.

You pull out the box crammed into the closet last December. The tangled mass of lights and wires stares up at you. The magic of the holidays is gone in a flash. You groan but soldier on, pulling out the strands and unthreading the tangles.

You plug in the strand and, groan again as only half the bulbs light up. Or perhaps none of them light, in which case, do you toss the whole lot or search for one of those little fuses that you really don't know what to do with?

And what about those extra bulbs you've been saving for years? They appear to be dead when you screw them into the strand — but maybe it's the wiring, not the bulb. So you try them in a different string with the same results. You throw up your hands and say forget it.

Or maybe you experience the absolute worst decorating nightmare: You've decorated the tree and stand back to ad-

mire your work of art in all its glory only to realize you forgot to string the lights.

We can't take all the frustration out of decorating, but we can help you save money on your holiday energy bill. Here's how:

Go with LED lights — Light-emitting diode lights may cost more, but according to the U.S. Department of Energy, they emit a brighter and less yellow light than incandescents, use up to 75 percent less energy, operate at cooler temperatures and can last 10 to 25 times as long. In fact, an incandescent may have a life of 1,200 to 2,500 hours compared to about 10,000 hours for a compact fluorescent light bulb and 20,000 to 25,000 for a LED. Some sources claim LEDs will last for 100,000 hours!

LED bulbs don't suddenly burn out, which makes replacing dead bulbs in a string unnecessary. And because they use less power, you can connect multiple strings without overloading a circuit.

Put lighting displays on a timer — No need to run them all night, just in the

early evening hours. If you don't use a timer, unplug the lights before you go to sleep.

Entertain efficiently — Here are some ways to be energy efficient while still throwing the best holiday party ever:

- Cook in the microwave. It uses 50 to 75 percent less energy than ovens and cooks food faster

- Use a slow cooker

- Avoid opening the oven door, which can lower the temperature inside by as much as 25 degrees for even a few seconds

- Turn off the oven several minutes before food is fully cooked; keep the door closed, and the food will finish cooking with the stored heat

- Don't preheat the oven for slow-cooking meats and casseroles

- If you use glass or ceramic pans, turn the oven temperature down 25 degrees

- Cook several items at a time in the oven, leaving room for air circulation

- Match pan to size of the heating element

- Keep refrigerator and freezer full to save energy by reducing the recovery time when the door is opened

- Wash only full loads in the dishwasher, and use its energy-saving cycles; washing by hand will use 37 percent less water than a dishwasher if you don't run the water continually

**What about fiber optic decorations?**

Fiber optic trees and decorations may be the single most efficient holiday lighting available.

In the past, a single incandescent halogen bulb from 5 to 50 watts transmitted light to the hundreds of tiny fibers along each branch of the tree. Though the tree and fiber light tubes were cool, the lamp itself was hot.

Now, light-emitting diodes have replaced the hot halogen lamp and the need for a motor to create rotating, color-changing effects. According to the Western Area Power Administration, the wattage is less than 20 for a large tree. You also can string additional LEDs on the fiber optic tree.

## West Central Electric Cooperative's Christmas & New Year's Holiday Closings:

**Monday, December 24, 2012 -- Closed**

**Tuesday, December 25, 2012 -- Closed**

**Tuesday, January 1, 2013 -- Closed**

**Outage calls will be taken by dispatchers at 1-800-491-3803.**



# Think safety and avoid a holiday decorating disaster

Few traditions are as unique to the holidays as festooning our homes and yards with twinkling lights and festive decorations. While these displays add to the magic of the season, they also increase our risks for holiday fires and injuries. So follow these steps to ensure that your traditions result in a safe, bright, and happy time for your family.

Carefully inspect each electrical decoration and extension cord before use, and discard any damaged items. Cracked sockets, bare or frayed wires, and loose connections may cause a serious shock or fire. Avoid overloading outlets, which can overheat and also cause a fire.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International recommends never connecting more than three strands of incandescent lights together. Do not pinch cords in windows or doors, or under heavy furniture.

When decorating outside, make sure outdoor outlets are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Check that all items and extension cords are marked for outdoor use. Exercise extreme caution when decorating near overhead power lines. Use a wooden or fiberglass ladder instead of metal. Keep yourself and all of your equipment at



**LOOK FOR THE UL SYMBOL...**Make sure connections are secure and cords are not worn or frayed. Remember the UL symbol ensures the item meets safety standards.

least 10 feet from power lines.

Take special care with Christmas trees. If purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. Heated rooms dry out live trees rapidly. Place the tree at least three feet away from all heat sources, includ-

ing fireplaces and space heaters. Be sure to keep the stand filled with water. For artificial trees, look for the label "fire resistant." Never use burning candles on or near your tree.

Whether your house is the most festive

on the block or you prefer a more low-key style, make safety an important part of your holiday preparations.

*Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International*

## Doug Rye Says...

### Your mobile home can be more efficient

What can you do to make your mobile home more energy efficient? That question is often asked when members get high summer and winter electricity bills. The solution may seem difficult and expensive, but there are some things that you can do yourself. Many are affordable, relatively easy and will make an impact on comfort and energy consumption.

Occasionally, I hear inappropriate comments about modular housing and mobile home parks. I have never thought that those comments were appropriate. My wife and I experienced some of the best days of our lives while living in a mobile home park. Every unit in that large park was a home for a family.

Many of those families had lower-than-average incomes and were there out of necessity. Others had average or above-average incomes and were there by choice. It was actually a very good living environment and a pleasant chapter in our lives. We lived in the park for about five years, all before 1976. The only thing that I knew about energy efficiency was that we had to use a yard sprinkler to spray water on the outdoor air conditioning unit in order to cool our new mobile home on a really hot day.

I now understand that probably all mobile homes built before 1976 would be considered energy obsolete using today's standards. Furthermore, most mobiles have similar energy-related problems regardless of geographical location. An exception would be if the roof had good

shade from the sun. For instance, if you place a unit under a 100-year-old shade tree rather than in the open, your unit would obviously be easier to cool in the summer.

Some years ago, I received a request from a large utility company to help teach their employees about energy efficiency. It was late winter and the company was receiving many high bill complaints from mobile home occupants. We decided to make some on-site visits to see if we could help. Our first stop was in a rural area.

As we were going up the gravel driveway, I could see the water heater from an exterior access panel door. The problem was the door was gone. I said, "John, that electric water heater is trying to heat the entire Earth on this cold winter day." I am certain that the water heater was using electricity 24/7. The missing door was also allowing a gigantic amount of heat to escape from the dwelling. We have no idea how or why the door was removed, but we found it under the unit. We reinstalled the door using long metal screws and weatherstripping.

That simple fix made a significant improvement by stopping the heat loss from both the water heater and dwelling. These simple actions made the home more comfortable and reduced the amount of energy needed to heat water and the occupants.

I wish all mobiles and modulars were as easy to fix as that one, but that is not the case. There is no way that I can

list every possible energy problem and solution within this column. But here are some suggestions that can help you get started:

1. If you are an electric co-op member, call your local electric cooperative and ask if the co-op staff can perform an energy audit on your home. The co-ops care about you and many have credentialed energy auditors on their staff.

2. If you receive an audit, please take it seriously and start making improvements, even if you can only address one item at a time. It doesn't matter how many energy improvements your unit may need. If you are going to stay there, it will be to your benefit to make the prescribed improvements.

3. If you cannot get an audit, this list should help you:

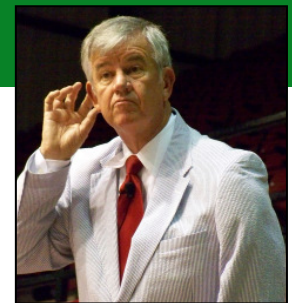
a. On a cold windy day, dampen your hand and go around the walls, windows and electrical outlets of each room, feeling for cold air. Caulk leaks using clear or white caulking as appropriate. Use foam for larger holes under sinks.

b. Install insulation gaskets on electrical outlets and switches. Gaskets can be purchased at home centers.

c. Install additional ceiling and wall insulation if feasible. You may need to ask an insulation professional if it is feasible for your particular unit.

d. Properly install skirting to inhibit cold air from blowing under the unit.

e. Be certain that all ductwork is intact, sealed and well insulated. This is a critical item for mobile and modular homes.



f. When it is time for a new water heater or new heating and air system, use the Rheem Marathon or the GE GeoSpring water heater and use the most efficient heat pump that you can afford. These two items may save you considerable dollars on your utility bill.

g. Visit [www.SmartEnergyTips.org](http://www.SmartEnergyTips.org) for dozens and dozens of energy saving tips, ideas and brochures.

h. And as always, you may call me with your questions at 501-653-7931. Merry Christmas to all!

*Doug Rye, a licensed architect living in Saline County, Ark., and the popular host of the "Home Remedies" radio show, works as a consultant for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas to promote energy efficiency to cooperative members statewide. To order Doug's video or ask energy efficiency-related questions, call Doug at 1-501-653-7931. More energy-efficiency tips, as well as Doug's columns, can also be found at [www.ecark.org](http://www.ecark.org)*

Listen to Doug Rye's "Home Remedies" show Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. on KKKX Radio, 105.7 FM.