



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

# West Central *Electric News*

March 2013



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

## 2013 Member Satisfaction Survey calls will begin soon, you may be asked to participate

During the next few months, West Central Electric Cooperative will be participating in a telephone survey that is conducted every three years to measure the quality of service provided to you, our members.

Members will be randomly selected and will be asked several questions about your energy usage and your satisfaction with the cooperative. It should take approximately 15 minutes to answer all questions.

The call center conducting the survey will identify themselves as calling on behalf of the cooperative. The call center is TSE Services from North Carolina, a subsidiary of North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives. They will be conducting calls Monday through Friday from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Service inspections continue throughout WCE service area

Service inspections continue throughout the cooperative service area, with Holden, Centerview and Fayetteville areas on the schedule for the next few months.

A WCE service inspector may be taking photos of poles and equipment in your area, as well as performing inspections at the meter. As always, all employees and contractors with the cooperative will drive vehicles with signs identifying them as working for WCE. Individuals will also carry identification.

Members with questions about personnel in their area may ask to see identification, or you may contact the office at 800-491-3803 or 660-584-2131 to verify there is an inspector scheduled to be at your location that day.



Lingering winter storms and the onset of spring storms can bring down power lines and poles. When outdoor activities begin, remember to stay away from downed lines; you can't tell if electricity is still flowing through them.

## Look up, stay alert during outdoor work and play

### *Warmer weather means increased opportunities for outside dangers*

As the weather begins to warm up, kids and adults alike will soon head outside to perform winter clean-up and play. Before they do, remind them to look up and be alert for power lines and other electrical hazards, the best way to stay safe from electrocution—and even death.

"Here at West Central Electric, using proper procedures and safety measures is a matter of life and death," said General Manager Mike Gray. "We take safety seriously at home, too. Accidents happen, but if we educate ourselves and our children, we can keep them to a minimum."

#### **SAFETY TIPS FOR KIDS**

- Never fly a kite on a rainy day or anywhere but an open space. A high

point in the sky makes a kite a grounding point for lightning, and kites could easily become tangled in power lines.

- Don't climb trees that are near power lines and poles—evergreens can disguise dangers this time of year.

- Stay far away from power lines lying on the ground. You can't tell if electricity is still flowing through them. If there's water nearby, don't go in it. Water is the best conductor of electricity.

- Obey signs that say "danger" and "keep out" around large electrical equipment, like substations. These signs aren't warnings; they're commands to keep you safe.

- Never climb a power pole.

#### **REMINDERS FOR ADULTS**

- If power lines run through your trees, contact West Central's Right-of-Way Coordinator Steve Long at 800-491-3803. Professional tree trimmers with proper protective equipment can trim branches safely.

- Remember that power lines and other utilities run underground, too. Call 811 to have utility lines marked before you start digging.

- Starting that winter cleanup yard work? Sweep dried leaves and debris from outdoor receptacles.

- If they're not already, consider upgrading your outdoor receptacles—or any outlets that could come in contact with water—to ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). GFCIs immediately interrupt power flow when a plugged-in device comes in contact with water. Regardless, keep your outlets and cords dry and covered outside.

- Use only weather-resistant, heavy-duty extension cords marked for outdoor use.

- Don't leave outdoor power tools unattended for curious children or animals to find.

For more safety tips and information, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

Sources: *Electrical Safety Foundation International, Safe Electricity*

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7867 S. Highway 13, P.O. Box 452  
Higginsville, MO 64037  
1-660-584-2131 or 1-800-491-3803

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

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[www.WestCentralElectric.coop](http://www.WestCentralElectric.coop)

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### Net Metering & Interconnection Act

West Central Electric Cooperative has a net metering agreement for interconnection of a distributed generation source.

Our policy, agreement and application now reflect the new standards set by the Net Metering and Easy Connection Act as of January 1, 2008.

For more information, contact our Higginsville office at 800-491-3803 or 660-584-2131.

## Doug Rye Says...

# It's all about the sun

Several things have happened recently to convince me that I should dedicate several articles to the very basics of energy efficiency. I have pondered this a lot and even wake up during the night thinking about it.

I have discussed some of these thoughts with young students, middle-aged adults and some senior adults. They all agree that we need to know more basics about energy efficiency. Just last week, while conducting a meeting at a high school auditorium, I asked the question, "As we know it, all energy comes from where?"

There were 75 people in attendance including students and adults. No one answered the question, so I asked it again.

Finally an adult answered, "From the sun."

That is the correct answer, and I, like many of you, had learned that in a science class many years ago. I'm sure that some others thought, after they heard the correct answer, "Oh yeah, I knew that too." But I am convinced that many in the room did not know that all energy comes from the sun. Wow, that's a really big statement, so let's look at some of the ways that the sun relates to the energy use of our home.

1. If there had been no sun a long time ago, there would be no coal for the generation of electricity today.

2. If there had been no sun in the past, there would be no natural gas for house heating or electricity generation today. This also applies to propane gas.

3. If there were no sun, there would be no wood to help heat a house.

4. If there were no sun, there would be no wind to turn a turbine to generate electricity.

5. If there were no sun, there would be no rain and, therefore, no water in the lake to generate electricity.

6. If there were no sun, biomass would not even be considered as a possible future source for generating electricity.

7. And last, and most obvious, if there were no sun, you could not have any solar generation.

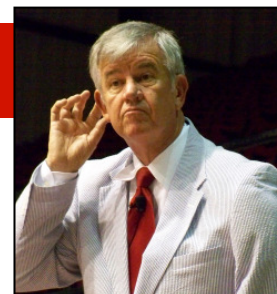
Isn't it interesting to note that just about all of this has to do with the generation of electricity? Why is this the case? It is because just about everything in the house, except the dog and the furniture, needs electricity. Even a gas furnace and a gas clothes dryer need electric fan motors to operate properly. And a gas range in the kitchen probably uses electricity for the clock and timers. For the last several years, electronic items have been the No. 1 gifts at Christmas and, yes, all electronics use electricity.

Well, I think we would all agree that the need for electricity is not going away and that the demand is most likely to increase. With that said, it is impera-

tive that we use electricity wisely. That is exactly why this column is placed in this publication.

Your electric co-op's mission is to provide you with adequate and affordable electricity. Folks, I am not an employee of any electric co-op, but I know for a fact that they all work hard to fulfill their mission to you, the members, in spite of difficult governmental regulations. Although you and I have no control whatsoever over utility rates, we do have control over use. Simply put, that is called conservation and energy efficiency.

Think with me for a minute. Just look at a tube of caulk. Energy was required to manufacture, package and ship the tube. Let's say that it took 50 cents to put the tube on the shelf. Now, let's suppose that 10 cents of the 50 cents was for electricity for the manufacturing. If you pay \$2 for the tube and caulk places in your house, you will then save 10 cents per month on your electric bill. The 10 cents of electricity that was used in producing the one tube of caulk would likely save hundreds of dollars of electricity over the life of the house. What if each household in America would use one tube? Wow, that would be huge. What if each household used 10 tubes? That total savings in the generation of electricity would be unbelievable.



It is not important that my dollar figures be exactly correct. But it is important that we use energy wisely today to help have adequate affordable energy in the future. We can do our part, and we can make a difference. Of course, without the sun, it wouldn't even matter.

See you next month when the sun will make the dogwood trees really beautiful.

*Note: Doug Rye, a licensed architect 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  
KXXK Radio, 105.7 FM.  
or online at 9 a.m.  
Saturday mornings at  
[www.1037thebuzz.com](http://www.1037thebuzz.com)**

**Planting trees or putting  
up a fence this spring?**

***Make sure to call before you dig.***





# All *fires* are not the same

Where there's smoke, there's fire. And while all blazes may look the same, fires should not be treated equally.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, more than 26,000 electrical home fires result in property damage, injuries, and even death every year. Remember the following acronym F.I.R.E for electrical safety. Even though the source and treatment of fires may differ, they produce the same results. You are no match for the force of a house fire -- learn F.I.R.E. and protect yourself.



## *Find the source before it starts*

Old or faulty wiring often emerges as the main culprit in causing electrical fires. In electrical fires, heat from wiring or an overloaded system can provide the strike that leads to a fire. But there are often signs before a fire even starts.



## *Investigate the signs*

If you notice flickering lights, recurring trips in a circuit breaker, or a tell-tale sizzling sound around wiring and hot light switches, call a qualified electrician. These may indicate an imminent fire hazard.



## *Remedy the Problem*

If you have any signs of a pending fire or have worries about old wiring, contact a professional electrician. Other precautions include:

- Use correct wattage bulbs to prevent overheating fixtures.
- Avoid using damaged cords or running cords under rugs.
- Do not overload outlets or extension cords.
- Do not use appliances in wet areas.
- Routinely check appliances for signs of wear and tear or overheating.



## *Exit the Building and Learn to Extinguish Properly*

If you are faced with an electrical fire, call 911 immediately and have everyone exit the building. If you feel you must face a small fire, know the proper way to approach it.

- Never use water on an electrical fire. Water conducts electricity, so it will not smother the fire and may lead to electrocution.

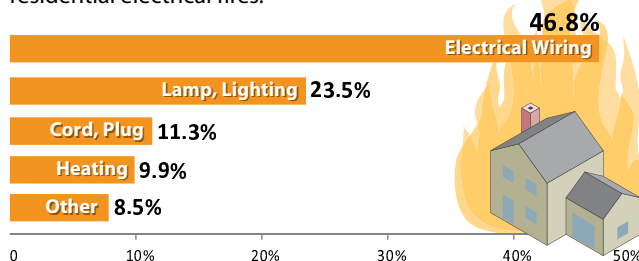
- If the circuit breaker does not trip in the area on fire, shut off the main breaker to the house if possible. Be sure to approach the breaker only if the fire is not nearby and if your hands are dry.

- Never use a Class A extinguisher on an electrical fire. Use a Class C or a multi-purpose ABC model. If there is no extinguisher available or the class of extinguisher is not known, baking soda may help smother the flames.

- Again, if the fire is not quickly extinguished, exit the building.

## Electrical Fire Culprits

About 26,000 household electrical fires occur in the U.S. every year. Following are the top five pieces of equipment that ignite residential electrical fires.



Source: U.S. Fire Administration National Fire Incident Reporting System; Residential Building Electrical Fires Volume 8, Issue 2; 2010 USFA Fire Estimate Summary



It is important to identify and fix electrical problems. Avoid using damaged cords like the one above, and remember to never run cords under rugs. Any electrical cords being used outside must be approved for outdoor use.



Sources: U.S. Fire Administration, Electrical Safety Foundation International, National Fire Incident Reporting System

Kelly Trapnell writes on safety and energy efficiency issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

## Insulate your home's slab

### Improve comfort and reduce energy costs

Cold concrete slabs don't typically make for a comfortable home. Seems like the cold just seeps upward into the house. But if you can put the slab within the house's thermal envelope, you'll likely be more comfortable.

If the slab is cold in your existing home, dig around the perimeter to install insulation, usually foam board, to reduce heating bills by up to 20 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. If you're building a new house on a slab, install foam board directly against the exterior of the slab and footing before backfilling, or put it under the slab and along the inside of the stem wall of the foundation.

# Tighten up that basement or crawl space

## Save energy, money by insulating under your home

If you live in a home with an unheated basement or in a home built on an crawl space, you know it can leak energy like a sieve and be darn cold in the winter.

To stop the energy leaks and become more comfortable, consider bringing these unconditioned spaces into the "building envelope." That's the shield you put in place with insulation, caulking and weatherstripping to keep conditioned and unconditioned air from mixing.

Start with sealing and caulking holes and cracks that leak air. Then insulate. The U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Savers, recommends insulating:

- All exterior walls, including walls between living spaces and unheated garages, shed roofs or storage areas. Use loose-fill or sprayed foam insulation; if your wall cavities will be open for a remodeling project, use batt and roll or insulating wall sheathing.
- Foundation walls above ground level.
- Foundation walls in heated basements, full wall either interior or exterior.
- Floors above cold spaces, such as vented crawl spaces and unheated garages.
- Any portion of the floor in a room that is cantilevered beyond the exterior wall below.
- Foundation walls of unvented crawl spaces – this is an alternative to insulating the floor between the crawl space and the house and now considered the best approach.
- Joist space to reduce air flows.

Learn more at [www.doe.gov/articles/taking-scary-basements](http://www.doe.gov/articles/taking-scary-basements).

# Keep the moisture out!

Moisture control is important in any area of your home, but perhaps it's most critical in a basement, crawl space or slab.

Vapor barriers — more accurately, vapor diffusion retarders — come in a variety of materials, typically available as membranes or coatings, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Membranes are generally thin, flexible materials but also include thicker sheet materials sometimes called "structural" vapor diffusion retarders. Materials such as rigid foam insulation, reinforced plastics, aluminum and stainless steel are relatively resistant to water vapor diffusion and are usually mechanically fastened and sealed at the joints.

Thinner membrane types come in rolls or as integral parts of building materials. Common examples include polyethylene sheeting and aluminum- or paper-faced fiberglass roll insulation. Another type is foil-backed wallboard. Most paint-like coatings also retard vapor diffusion.

For existing homes, start by channeling water that may accumulate outside the foundation walls away from the house. Seal obvious air leaks around the perimeter. Cover exposed foundation walls with exterior sheathings such as polyethylene sheets, builder's foil and foam board insulation. Or try vapor-barrier paints, which work best in colder climates.

If exterior coverage is too difficult, ask an energy auditor to advise you on what vapor diffusion retarder to use inside the basement.

For crawl spaces, energy-efficiency expert Doug Rye advises completely sealing the crawl space year-round to eliminate mold and moisture problems in warm months of the year.

The Department of Energy offers these moisture control tips for new construction:

- Keep all untreated wood away from the earth.
- Provide rain drainage, such as gutters, to carry rainwater away from the house.
- Slope the earth away from the house for at least 5 feet at a minimum 5 percent

Wet basement



Dry basement

grade and establish drainage swales to direct rainwater around the house.

- Add a sill gasket to provide air sealing.
- Install a protective membrane between the foundation and the sill plate to serve as a capillary break and reduce wicking of water up from the masonry foundation wall.
- Damp proof the below-grade portion of the foundation wall to prevent the wall from absorbing ground moisture by capillary action.
- Install drainage plane material or gravel against the foundation wall to relieve hydrostatic pressure and channel water to the foundation drain.
- Provide a foundation drainage system at the bottom of the footing, not on top, when the foundation floor (interior grade) is below the exterior grade; surround a perforated 4-inch drain pipe with gravel, and cover it with filter fabric.
- Install 6- to 10-mil polyethylene vapor barrier over at least 4 inches of gravel under the basement

or on-grade slab floor to serve as a capillary break and vapor diffusion retarder.

Learn more about controlling moisture at [www.doe.gov/energysaver/articles/moisture-control](http://www.doe.gov/energysaver/articles/moisture-control).