



*Stacks of
Christmas Wishes
from your friends at
West Central
Electric Cooperative!*

Please join us for our annual

Member Appreciation Day

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

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

at our

Higginsville and Oak Grove offices

**Pay your December electric bill in person at the Member Appreciation Day, and be registered to win a \$25 energy credit for January 2012 electric bill!
(Four certificates will be given away at each office)*



West Central *Electric News*



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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

Out with the old

Co-op begins process of retiring unused services

Within the next several months, West Central Electric crews will be retiring services around the cooperative's territory which are no longer connected.

"We have begun looking at those services that are not being utilized, and will begin the process to remove those services," Oak Grove Branch Manager Brent Schlotzhauer said. "Removing these

services, will save the cooperative money by

eliminating the brush upkeep, the need for annual inspections, and also the paying of property taxes on them."

Members are urged to contact the cooperative if they have a service on their property that is not being used and needs to be removed. Members are also asked to notify the cooperative if they have a service that is currently not connected, and have plans to reconnect that service at a later date.

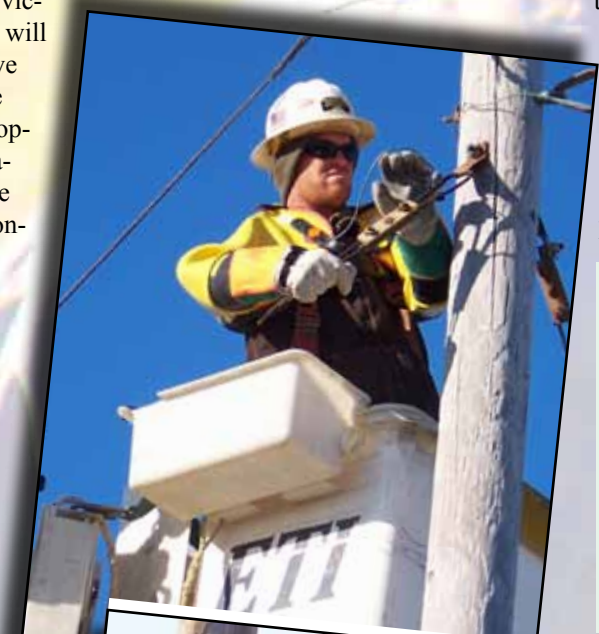
Those services will be left connected.

Schlotzhauer said the project is part of the cooperative's maintenance and line upgrade program.

If you have an electric service on your property that is no longer used, please contact the cooperative at 800-491-3803 or 660-584-2131 so we can retire that service.



OUT WITH THE OLD...WCE crews work to retire one of the many unused services within the cooperative's service area. (Top left photo) Journeyman Lineman Tim Frerking cuts a guy wire attached to a pole in preparation of removing a service line. (Bottom photo) Eric Wegener works an unused pole out of the ground. (Top right photo) Derek Cole removes hardware from a felled pole.



Headquarters:

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

District Office:

506 N. Broadway
Oak Grove, MO 64075
1-816-625-8211

Website:

www.WestCentralElectric.coop

24-Hour Number:

1-800-491-3803

General Manager:

Mike Gray

Board of Directors:

Clark Bredehoeft, President
Ron Steelman, Vice-Pres.
Paul Nolte, Treasurer
Robert Simmons, Secretary
Stan Rhodes, Asst. Sect.
Dale Jarman, Director
Max Swisegood, Director
Densil Allen, Director
Richard Strobel, Director

Watch for details about these important programs coming soon in the pages of West Central Electric News:

- 2012 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

Gray is named to AMEC Training and Development Committee

West Central Electric Cooperative Manager Mike Gray was recently appointed as a district representative to the Training and Development Committee of the Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives (AMEC), Jefferson City.

AMEC is the service organization of the state's 47 electric cooperatives, which serve more than 560,000 rural consumers.

As a member of the Training and Development Committee, Gray will be responsible for activities relating to improving the professional and technical abilities of electric cooperative

employees and directors. These activities include workshops and conferences developed by AMEC and NRECA.

Gray said he looks forward to working with the committee.

"Like in any field, continuing education is important for employees to be at the top of their game," he said.

"The fifth Cooperative Principle is 'Education, Training and Information,' which cooperatives not only provide for their members, but also their elected officials, directors and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives," Gray said.



GRAY

Efficient Timing...

Why the time of day you use energy matters to your co-op

Just as you can get a cheaper airfare by catching a red-eye flight, using energy when fewer folks are pulling power out of the electric grid generally costs your co-op, and ultimately you and your neighbors, much less.

There's a certain amount of energy we all use, regardless of whether we're at home or away. Refrigerators, air conditioning and heating systems, and other steady appliances create base load power requirements—the minimum amount of power your co-op needs to reliably supply all of its members.

Of course, we all have energy use patterns—television shows to watch, dishes to wash. Lots of consumers tend to use electricity during the same "peak" periods—in the morning to warm up the house and get kids ready for school, and in the afternoon after work when a home lights up with power-draining activities. And then there's the interval between these two extremes.

Why Timing Matters

Our price for wholesale power rises and falls depending on the type of fuel (coal, natural gas, nuclear, hydro, etc.) generating electricity, which largely depends on the time of day when power is used. For example, generating baseload power with coal costs far less than starting up a natural gas peaking plant to meet peak electricity consumption on hot, humid summer weekday afternoons or extremely frigid winter mornings.

During the cold winter months, the increased use of space heaters, engine heaters, heat tapes and electric heat adds to the cooperative's electrical demand. As temperatures sink toward zero, the demand goes up and increases the likelihood of a "peak alert."

"Hitting a peak increases our demand, which increases our wholesale power costs for the next year," General Manager Mike Gray said. "We urge our members to conserve during these times because this is something they can do to directly affect their electric bills."

You Can Help

You can help by limiting your use of dishwashers, washers and dryers, and other

appliances during a peak alert. Peak alert situations happen most frequently between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 p.m., although they can happen at any time.

Listen to your area radio stations for peak alert announcements, and try to reduce your use of electricity during those periods. The voluntary reduction of electric usage by members can make a big difference.

Here's a quick look at the types of power plants and fuels used to supply electricity at various times:

• **Baseload:** These are large, efficient generating stations providing enough dependable electric power at a low cost to meet the minimum level of electricity needed at any given time. They do not start or stop quickly, and instead are run around the clock.

Power Sources: Coal, nuclear, hydro, and large natural gas-fired power plants; in some regions biomass and geothermal power stations.

• **Intermediate Load:** These plants handle sharp increases in demand, filling the gap between baseload plants and peaking plants. Also known as load-following plants, these facilities are larger and therefore more efficient than peaking plants.

Power Sources: Natural Gas, Coal

• **Peak Load:** Though expensive and small, these plants can start generating power quickly during times when electric consumption reaches its highest point.

Power Sources: Natural gas, diesel fuel

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

Friday, December 23, 2011 -- Closed

Monday, December 26, 2011 -- Closed

Monday, January 2, 2012 -- Closed

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

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 least 10 feet from power lines.

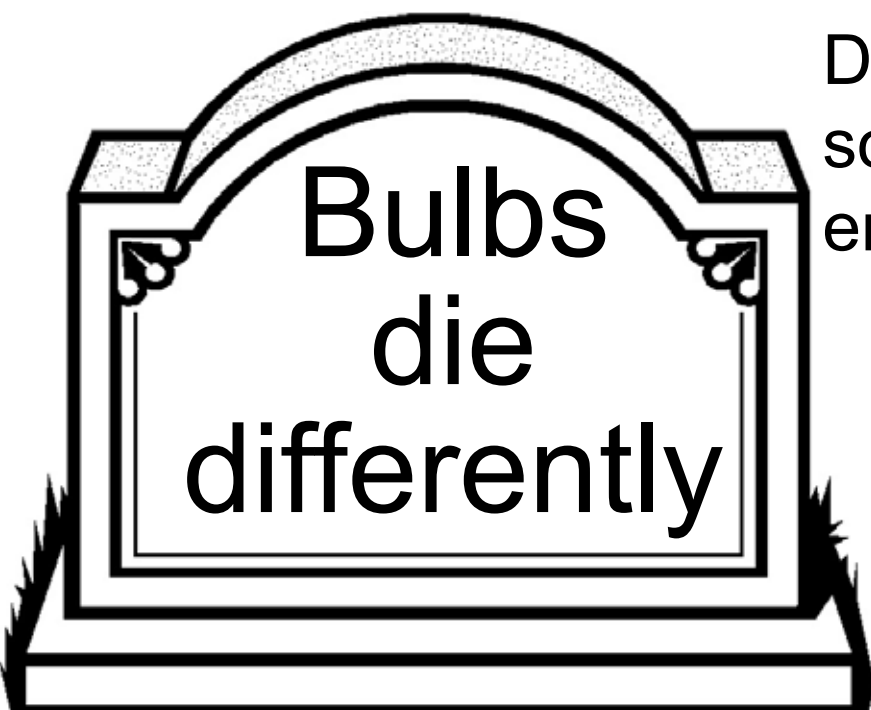
Take special care with Christmas trees. If purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. Heated rooms dry out live trees rapidly. Place the tree at least three feet away from all heat sources, including fireplaces and space heaters. Be sure to keep the stand filled with water. For artificial trees, look 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



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.



**Bulbs
die
differently**

Don't be fooled; popping sound or smoke means CFL's end-of-life mechanism WORKS

Worried when you hear a compact fluorescent lightbulb (CFL) pop or sizzle? Despite confusion caused by an e-mail hoax circulating since April 2010, these sounds signal the bulb is working safely in its final hours. Smoke, a popping noise, and even a slight odor are typical and do not pose a fire risk as claimed in the misleading e-mail.

According to Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. (UL), an independent not-for-profit firm that tests and sets minimum standards for electric-consuming items, about 130-150 million CFLs are sold every year in the U.S. While the bulbs produce 75 percent less heat than their incandescent cousins, differences between the bulbs go deeper than the amount of heat released. As the first wave of CFLs begins reaching the end of their lifespan, consumers are learning the bulbs die differently, too.

"As with any new product, it's important that consumers understand how it works," notes John Drengenberg, UL consumer affairs manager.

Most folks know traditional incandescent lightbulbs tend to burn out the

same way: a pop, a flash, and, when shaken, the familiar rattle confirming the bulb needs to be changed. With CFLs, light dims over time and the lamp may produce a more dramatic pop, emit a distinct odor, and even release some smoke. Sometimes the plastic at the base of a CFL will turn black, which is normal in most cases as safety standards require application of special flame-retardant plastics.

"CFLs are one of the products we regularly test to specific requirements for electrical safety, fire, and shock hazards," Drengenberg notes. "Any popping sounds or smoke that a consumer might see when a CFLs burns out means that the bulb's end-of-life mechanism worked as it should have."

Consumers should look for the UL mark on packaging when purchasing CFLs.

"If a CFL carries the UL mark, consumers know we have investigated it to specific safety requirements," reports Drengenberg.

For more information, visit www.SafetyAtHome.com.

Sources: Underwriters Laboratories



BURNED OUT...The burned area at the base of this compact fluorescent lightbulb shows that it has ended its life properly, and is a normal part of the process.