

This May, Take Time To Plug Into Safety



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER/CEO STEVE YOUNG

THIS MONTH, I'D LIKE TO TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT ON THE importance of safety. May is Electrical Safety Month, and Hamilton County Electric Cooperative is dedicated to sharing safety tips and helping raise awareness about the dangers of electricity. We all depend on electricity to power our lives, but accidents can happen when power sources are improperly used.



Our Responsibility to You

Hamilton County EC's concern for safety extends beyond our employees. We care deeply about the safety of our members, and this month, we encourage you to plug into safety. According to Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of Americans are critically injured or killed annually as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes.

To promote safety education in our local communities, we offer safety programs to area schools and regularly provide electrical safety content in these pages. We encourage you to contact us if you see a downed power line or any other dangerous electrical situation.

We strive to provide our communities with safe, reliable and affordable electricity and to serve as your trusted energy adviser, now and well into the future.

Our Responsibility to Our Employees

It is no accident that safety is a top priority among the employees of Hamilton County EC. We are committed to a culture of safety that is integral to our daily operations.

Our lineworkers are required to wear personal protective equipment when on the job. This includes special fire-resistant clothing that will self-extinguish, limiting potential injuries from burns and sparks. Insulated and rubber gloves are worn in tandem to protect from electrical shock.

Our employees—those in the field and in the office—regularly attend programs to enhance their safety awareness. Our lineworkers start each job with a tailgate meeting to discuss the project before them and how best to complete it safely.

As the general manager and CEO of Hamilton County EC, I believe it is my duty and responsibility to raise awareness about the importance of electrical safety. That's why I encourage you to take a moment to plug into safety.



Head Outdoors Safely

WHEN THE WEATHER WARMS UP, GAR-deners and do-it-yourselfers head outdoors. If that includes you, here are five tips for working safely with and around electrical equipment.

1. Look up before setting up a ladder to paint or climb on the roof. Your ladder should not come within 10 feet of an overhead power line. Touching a power line with anything puts you at risk of injuries or worse.

2. Unplug your power tools when you're finished using them. A plugged-in tool could overheat and cause a fire. Unplugging saves energy because anything that's plugged in continues to draw some electricity, even when it's not in use.

3. Don't use damaged tools, even if they still work. Tools with frayed power cords or cracked parts are dangerous.

4. Water and electricity do not mix. Don't use your hose while you have power tools plugged in nearby. If the grass, garage or patio is wet, don't use an electric tool while standing in or on it.

5. Teach your children how to work and play safely around electricity. Caution them about climbing trees or flying drones too close to power lines. Remind them to never touch a power line in the air or on the ground with anything.

Downed Power Lines Never Safe

STORMS, ACCIDENTS AND OTHER EVENTS CAN CAUSE POWER LINES TO HIT THE GROUND, creating a very dangerous situation for anyone nearby.

Here's what every member of your family needs to know about electric shocks:

▶ If someone comes into contact with electricity, do not touch that person or anything the person is touching. Call 911.

▶ If a power line falls on your car, do not get out of the car. You are safe inside your vehicle.

▶ If an electric wire falls on your car and there's a risk of fire, **take these steps to safely exit the vehicle:**

1. Open the door, but do not step out of the car yet.
2. Make sure that you jump completely free of the vehicle with both feet together, avoiding simultaneous contact with the car and the ground.
3. Remember, once you jump from a car with a power line on it, the danger may not be over. Electricity can spread out through the ground in a circle from any downed line. Hop or shuffle (keeping both feet on the ground at all times) as far away as possible from the vehicle.
4. Do not try to help someone else from the car while you're standing on the ground. If you do, you will become a path for electricity and could be injured.

▶ When a wire falls to the ground, it may still be live, even if you don't see sparks. Call 911 and your electric cooperative if you see a downed wire. Warn others to keep their distance.

▶ Wood is a poor conductor of electricity, but it is still a conductor, especially when wet. Do not use a wooden ladder—or any other type—near a power line. If a ladder begins to fall into a power line, don't grab it. Let it fall and call us.

▶ Don't try to handle electric emergencies at home, even if you're wearing rubber gloves or shoes.

▶ If the source of electricity is an appliance, grab the plug—not the cord—and pull it out of the outlet. If you cannot safely remove the plug, turn off the power at the fuse or circuit breaker.



ANNE STAHL | ISTOCK.COM



Hamilton County EC Director Henry Langford Retires

AFTER 41 YEARS OF SERVICE, HENRY

Langford has retired as the longest-serving member of the Hamilton County Electric Cooperative Board of Directors.

Langford was elected to represent District 4 (Lampasas County area) in August 1978. He won reelection each three-year term until his retirement March 26.

In his time on the board of directors, Langford served as vice president from August 20, 1996, to August 18, 1998, and as president from August 28, 1998, to August 2002. To express its gratitude to Langford for his many years of service, the HCEC Board of Directors presented him with a framed, signed resolution of appreciation, a meter lamp and an engraved knife at the March board meeting.

The co-op's board of directors and employees alike will miss Langford's congeniality, wise counsel, and pleasant company and demeanor, and extend to him their sincere best wishes.

Budget-Friendly Efficiency Upgrades



STEVE DEBENPORT | ISTOCK.COM

THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO MEASURE ENERGY EFFICIENCY improvements. There's the payback period—the amount of time it will take for the improvement to pay for itself. Then there's comfort. Improvements can often increase the comfort level of a home—not easy to measure but one of the driving forces behind home weatherization efforts. There are several areas of the home that can be improved easily, without breaking your budget.

Lighting

There has been a steady decline in the price of LED bulbs for residential consumers. Nowadays, 60-watt-replacement LEDs can be purchased for \$5 or less. LEDs should save 60% or more on power costs compared to incandescent bulbs and last for many years. New LED fixtures are also an affordable option. They come with LED bulbs built in so you never need to change the bulbs.

Heating and Air Conditioning

The Energy Information Administration estimates that heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems account for 22% of a typical home's annual electric bill. While newer systems can be 20%–45% more efficient than older ones, the upfront cost is often a barrier to adoption.

But there are still ways to save. Simple solutions such as changing air filters at least every three months will increase airflow to rooms, increase the life of the HVAC unit's motor and improve air quality in the home. Sealing and insulating ductwork can be done in a weekend and results in energy savings of up to 20%.

To lessen the amount of work that heating and cooling systems need to do, it is important to find and seal air leaks. Look for leaks around exterior doors and windows, electric outlets, and entrance points for TV and phone cables. Also check dryer vents and any place with an opening in the wall. To seal leaks, apply caulk, spray foam or weatherstripping to these areas.

Simple acts such as cooking outdoors on a hot summer day or keeping curtains closed to keep out the summer sun will keep the interior of your home cooler and reduce the amount of time AC units need to operate.

Appliances and Electronics

The appliances and gadgets that make life easier are also among the largest users of electricity in our homes. When buying a new appliance, narrow your choices to those with an Energy Star label. That simple act can result in 10%–15% savings in energy consumption.

Other simple household tips:

- ▶ Clean dryer lint traps after every cycle, and don't overdry—you'll save energy and extend the life of your clothes.
- ▶ Replace worn refrigerator door gaskets to stop cool air from leaking from the refrigerator.
- ▶ Clean refrigerator coils and keep fridges away from heat-generating appliances such as an oven.

Home electronics, like computers, TVs and game systems, consume power even when turned off—what are known as “energy vampires.” According to a study conducted by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, the average home loses 8% of its monthly energy consumption to these vampires. A full 75% of the power used to run home electronics is consumed when those appliances are turned off, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Cutting off power by using a power or smart strip is an easy way to stop this needless waste of energy.

The best energy efficiency improvements are often the easiest. Turning lights off when leaving a room, sealing windows and doors, and cleaning refrigerator coils aren't as much fun as buying a shiny new appliance. But these simple tasks are proven ways to save energy and increase comfort on a budget.

Reminders for National Electrical Safety Month

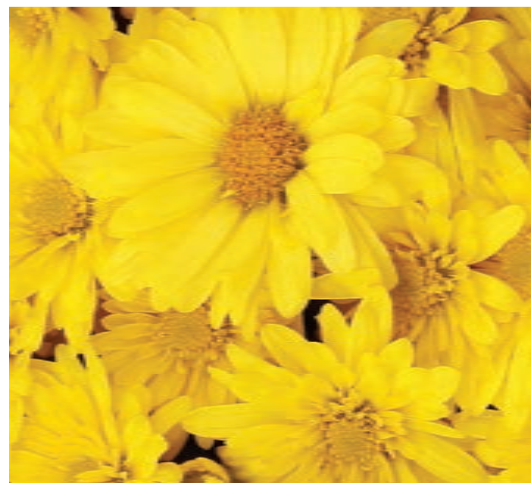
EVERY DAY, WE RELY ON ELECTRICITY TO POWER OUR HOMES AND OFFICES. HOWEVER, it can be easy to take for granted the safety of electric appliances and equipment and power lines. May is National Electrical Safety Month—a great time to raise awareness of how to avoid electrical hazards.

Indoors

- ▶ Check electric cords for fraying or cracking. Replace cords that may be damaged, and don't overload electric outlets.
- ▶ Extension cords are intended to be temporary. If you find yourself using extension cords regularly, have an electrician add outlets where you need them.
- ▶ Don't run cords under carpets or rugs and don't tack or nail cords to walls or floors.
- ▶ Keep electric appliances and tools away from water. Never reach for or unplug an appliance that has fallen into water; instead, turn the power off at the breaker before you unplug the appliance or remove it from the water.
- ▶ Never put anything other than an electrical plug in an outlet. Use outlet covers or caps to protect children.
- ▶ Keep your home's electrical system in good repair. Contact a licensed electrical contractor if you have flickering lights, sparks or nonfunctioning outlets, or need wiring repairs or upgrades.

Outdoors

- ▶ Never touch downed power lines.
- ▶ Always call 911 or your electric cooperative if you see lines down.
- ▶ Watch for overhead lines every time you use a ladder, work on roofs or in trees, or carry long tools or tall loads. Keep kites, drones and metallic balloons away from power lines.
- ▶ Know what's below before you dig. Call 811 three days in advance of your project to have underground utility lines, pipes and cables marked for free.
- ▶ Avoid planting trees underneath power lines or near utility equipment.



MAY HOLIDAYS

Cinco de Mayo

Tuesday, May 5

Mother's Day

Sunday, May 10

Memorial Day

Monday, May 25

Our offices will be closed in observance of Memorial Day.

Hamilton County Electric Cooperative Association

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Steve Young

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Contact Us

*For general information
or to report an outage*

CALL US

(254) 386-3123 local or

1-800-595-3401 toll-free

PAYMENT LOCATIONS

Hamilton County EC Office

420 N. Rice St., Hamilton

Brown & Wesson Insurance

915 Third St., Goldthwaite

Fort Gates Water Corporation

103 Gateway Circle, Gatesville

Kempner Water Supply

11986 E. Highway 190, Kempner

Lometa City Hall

109 W. San Saba St., Lometa

Online

hamiltonelectric.coop

Telephone

Call 1-877-833-4031 to pay using our automated phone system (credit/debit card or check).

Bill payments can be set up to be bank drafted or charged to a debit or credit card monthly.