

May Is Electrical Safety Month

Putting Safety First This Month – and Throughout the Year

It's May — and Oconto Electric Cooperative is celebrating National Electrical Safety Month. While safety for our members is top priority year-round, Electrical Safety Month is a time to acknowledge the importance of safety excellence.

This year, we're focusing on electrical safety in the home. Electricity is the cause of over 140,000 fires each year, resulting in more than 500 deaths, 4,000 injuries, and \$1.6 billion in property damage, according to Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI).

There are many measures you can take to ensure the safety of your loved ones. Use these helpful tips from ESFI to safeguard your home.

Outlets

- Check for outlets that have loose-fitting plugs, which can overheat and lead to fire.
- Replace any missing or broken wall plates.
- Make sure there are safety covers on all unused outlets that are accessible to children.

Plugs

- Make sure your plugs fit your outlets.
- Never remove the ground pin (third prong) to make a three-prong fit a two-conductor outlet; this could lead to an electrical shock.
- Never force a plug into an outlet if it doesn't fit.

In the Kitchen

- Vacuum refrigerator coils every three months to eliminate dirt buildup that can reduce efficiency and create fire hazards.
- Ensure all countertop appliances are located away from the sink.
- All appliance cords should be placed away from hot surfaces. Pay particular attention to cords around toasters, ovens, and ranges. Cords can be damaged by excess heat.
- Avoid overloading outlets with too many appliances.

Light the Way to Safety

- The wattage of the bulbs you use in your home should match the wattage indicated on the light fixture. Overheated fixtures can lead to a fire.
- Extension cords should not be used to provide power on a long-term or permanent basis. Have additional receptacles installed by a professional to provide power where needed.

Be Prepared

- Nearly two-thirds of fire deaths result from fires in homes without working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms should be located on every level of your home, inside each bedroom, and outside each sleeping area.
 - Test smoke alarms every month. Batteries should be replaced at least once a year — or sooner if indicated in the manufacturers' instructions. All smoke alarms should be replaced at least every 10 years.

- Talk to your family about an emergency plan in the event of a fire in your home.

Electrical safety awareness and education can save lives. For more tips and information about electrical safety, visit www.esfi.org. ■



Check lamp cords to make sure they are in good condition — not damaged or cracked. Do not attempt to repair damaged cords yourself. Take any item with a damaged power cord to an authorized repair center.

Look Up, Stay Alert During Outdoor Work, Play

As the weather begins to warm up, kids and adults alike will soon head outside to perform winter clean-up and to 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 Oconto Electric Cooperative, using proper procedures and safety measures is a matter of life and death,” explains Chris Adams, staking/safety engineer. “We take safety seriously at home, too. Accidents happen, but if we educate ourselves and our children, we can keep them to a minimum.”

Outdoor Safety for Children

- Open areas are great places to fly kites and model airplanes, but do not fly them near overhead power lines or electrical substations. A kite string can conduct electricity from an overhead power line to the person on the ground.
- Teach children to never play around pad-mounted transformers or electrical substations.
- Never climb trees near power lines. A tree may be inviting to climbers, but trees near power lines could be conductors of electricity if branches are touching the wires. Even if branches are not touching power lines, they could if weight from a child is added.
- 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.

Outdoor Safety for Adults

- Watch out for nearby power lines when you prune trees, clean a swimming pool, install or remove an antenna, work on a roof, or carry long tools or pipes.
- If tree branches are bearing weight on the power lines, please call OEC.
- Call a professional tree trimmer with proper protective equipment to safely trim branches that have power lines running through them.
- Remember that power lines and other utilities run



Ladders placed too close to power lines become dangerous conduits of electricity. Source: Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

underground, too. Call Diggers Hotline at 811 to have utility lines marked before you start digging.

- 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.
- Inspect power tools and electric lawn mowers before each use for frayed power cords, broken plugs, and cracked or broken housings. If the product is damaged, stop using it and have it repaired or replaced.

For more safety tips (342910) and information, visit SafeElectricity.org. ■

Sources: Electrical Safety Foundation International, Safe Electricity



**Oconto Electric Cooperative and
OEC's RadioShack in Oconto Falls
will be closed on
Monday, May 25 in
honor of
Memorial Day.**

Oconto Electric Cooperative



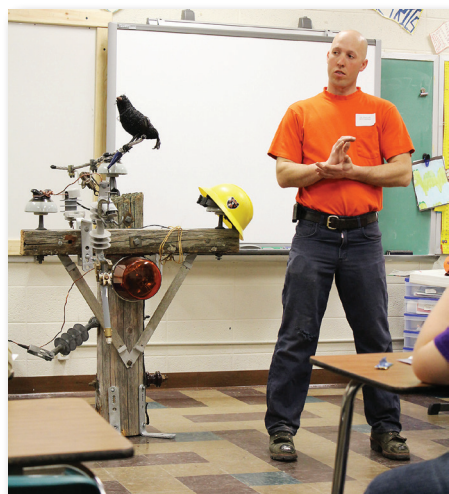
March 18, 2015, was the annual career day at Washington Middle School in Oconto Falls. Students were able to attend six sessions throughout the day that exposed them to various career opportunities.

OEC Journeyman Lineman Scott Bancroft and City of Oconto Falls Journeyman Lineman John Salscheider worked together to bring the students information about their careers.

Scott and John presented six times throughout the day. Their sessions were very interactive, with the students putting on the gear and using the equipment that is used everyday in a lineperson's career (342700). Students also

viewed a short video on the basic duties of a lineperson.

Oconto Electric Cooperative enjoys going to our schools and being a part of our communities. During April, Scott gave safety demonstrations in local schools as a part of OEC's Electrical Safety Month campaign. ■



OEC lineman Scott explains to the students what a typical day is like for a lineman.



Every time a student asked a question, he or she was rewarded with a piece of candy. In order to eat the candy the student had to unwrap it while wearing the linemen's gloves. This exercise demonstrated how hard it is to handle small objects while wearing the large gloves.

Scott and John teaches students how to install an insulator.



Students Explore Cooperatives, Leadership at Co-ops Yes! Conference

About 120 Minnesota, Wisconsin, and South Dakota high school students learned about cooperatives and honed their leadership skills at Cooperative Network's annual Co-ops Yes! Youth Leadership Conference in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, March 16–17. Thirty area cooperatives fully sponsored the students, several state FFA officers, and speakers to attend this year's event.

Co-ops Yes! participants heard from speakers including Lisa Moorhouse, CHS Inc. communication manager, who provided an introduction to cooperatives and had students conceive their own co-ops based on a perceived need in their communities. Motivational Speaker Craig Hillier returned with his interactive and inspiring message on "breakthrough leadership," helping students identify their leadership styles and learn how to work as a team to achieve their goals. In breakout sessions, participants explored co-op careers, effective communications, leadership through cooperation, and the "credit union difference." At the closing session, Actor David Mann left students with some actionable ways to tap into their leadership potential. Students also enjoyed a formal banquet, followed by Hypnotist Al Snyder, and a dance. ■



Oconto Electric Cooperative sponsored four students to attend the 2015 Co-ops Yes! Conference in Eau Claire. They were Haley Meunier, Cortney Meunier, Elizabeth Coopman, and Taylor Timm. All four had a good time while they learned about leadership and cooperatives.

Hidden Account Numbers

Oconto Electric Cooperative hides two account numbers in the local pages of the Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News each month. If you spot your account number, call our office before you receive the next issue, and OEC will give you a \$15 credit on your electric bill or a \$25 credit if you have a load management receiver. The April account numbers belonged to Oliver Shallow Jr., Lena, and Amy Heroux, Abrams.

OEC Insight



Karen Friedman Recently Recognized for 30 Years of Service

May 7, 1984, Karen Friedman was hired at OEC as a receptionist. Since then she has been in the billing department, accounting department, and in 1999 after the retirement of Mike Marquardt, she took over as the chief financial officer. Karen says, "I'm approaching my 31st year and it has been amazing. This is the best place to work! I thank God for it everyday."

Coworkers describe Karen as upbeat, outgoing, always positive, and having a huge heart. Congratulations, Karen. ■



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