

# BELFALLS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

P.O. Box 598 • Rosebud, TX 76570 • Phone (254) 583-7955

## SAFETY MATTERS

*One of the seven cooperative principles that Belfalls Electric Cooperative holds is our commitment to community.*

A commitment to the community isn't just about how many sponsorships we provide or how many promotional items we give to organizations—it is also about the effort we make to ensure that our members take good care of their community, family and themselves.

The National Electrical Safety Foundation has dubbed May "Electrical Safety Month." We thought this would be a great time to tell you a few simple things to remember to ensure your home is electrically safe. Please remember, too, that if you ever have a question concerning electric safety or any co-op matter, give us a call. We'll be happy to visit with you and answer any questions you may have.

**Outlets:** Replace missing or broken wall plates, and make sure they're protected by child-safety covers if there are little ones in your home or little ones who visit.

**Cords:** It's tempting to nail or staple cords to walls and baseboards to

keep them out of the way, but if you puncture the cord, it can overheat and catch fire.

**Extension Cords:** Extension cords are meant to be used temporarily—not as a permanent addition to your home's wiring. Don't run cords under rugs or carpets, check for damaged or frayed cords, and make sure the cord is rated for the current of the appliance you are using.

**Plugs:** The third pin on the plugs of appliances is there for a reason—it's a grounding pin. Never cut the pin off the plug to fit it into a two-prong outlet.

**Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupters:** GFCIs interrupt the flow of power when they sense a problem in a circuit that can cause a shock. If you don't have GFCIs protecting your bathroom, kitchen and outdoor outlets, add them now.

**Light Bulbs:** Did you know that each lamp or fixture in your home is designed for a light bulb with a specific wattage? If you put a 100-watt

bulb into a socket designed for a 75-watt bulb, it could cause a fire. Each socket should list the maximum wattage allowed.

**Circuit Breaker and Fuses:** It is important to replace blown fuses and worn circuit breakers with the correct size fuse. If you don't know the correct size, call an electrician.

**Water and Electricity:** They don't mix! Take a second after you blow-dry your hair in the bathroom to unplug the hair dryer. If the hair dryer falls into the water, it can shock or electrocute anyone who touches it—even if it is turned off.

**Appliances:** Have you ever gotten a shock from a kitchen appliance? It is a warning. Unplug the appliance and replace it.

**Entertainment/Computer Equipment:** Protect intricate parts of your expensive equipment with a surge protector. Also check for damaged wiring, plugs and connectors.

Please be safe around electricity! It makes our job—and your life—easier.

## Statement of Nondiscrimination

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The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Joe W. Marek, general manager. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from, and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or

the Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Stop 1510, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-1510; or the Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410; or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

# DURING ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH, CHECK FOR HAZARDS

Most electrical house fires could be prevented if homeowners would correct five common hazards, says the Electrical Safety Foundation International, which sponsors National Electrical Safety Month in May.

## Check for these five hazards in your home:

**#1.** If your bathrooms, kitchen, laundry room and outdoor outlets aren't protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters, have an electrician install them today. They cut off electricity to an appliance when they sense trouble on the circuit. They can prevent electrocutions. The same goes for arc-fault circuit interrupters, which the electrician can install in your fuse box or circuit

breaker box. They shut off the circuits in case of an "arc," which can start a fire.

**#2.** Replace frayed, cracked or cut power cords and extension cords. Don't try to repair them, and never patch them up with electrical tape. Make sure your new cords are certified by Underwriters Laboratories or another testing lab, and keep them out of high-traffic areas.

**#3.** Unplug extension cords that have been in place for more than a week. Extension cords are not designed for permanent use. If your home has too few outlets for all of your appliances, call an electrician and

get some more.

**#4.** Likewise, power strips and surge suppressors, while giving you access to more plugs, don't add any capacity to the original outlet. If you plug too many appliances into one outlet, it will overheat and cause a fire hazard. Don't overload your circuits.

**#5.** You plug your most expensive equipment into wall outlets. When is the last time you checked those outlets for problems? (Most people admit they've never checked their outlets.) Check for hot outlets, loose-fitting plugs, discolored wall plates and missing wall plates.

## KNOW WHEN STORMS ARE COMING

You know they're coming—the high winds, fierce lightning and heavy rains. Prepare now so you're not caught in the dark.

### Some tips:

- Listen to weather reports so you'll know when a storm is on its way.
- If someone in your home relies on electrically powered life-support equipment, arrange for a backup power supply, like a portable generator.
- Keep flashlights and a battery-powered radio (and fresh batteries) handy.
- If the power goes out, check your home's circuit breaker or fuse box. If flipping the breaker or replacing the fuse doesn't get the lights back on, call your electric cooperative.
- Stay away from fallen power lines, and report them to the electric cooperative immediately.
- If the lines around your home or the wires that enter your home appear damaged, do not attempt to fix them yourself. Call a qualified local electrical contractor for help.

## THIS SPRING, THINK SUMMER

Spring is a good time to think about how hot it could get this summer.

Give your air conditioning system a fighting chance at keeping your home cool in the months ahead—without using more electricity than necessary.

### Here's how to keep energy bills low this summer:

- Vacuum the dust from your refrigerator's coils. Dirty coils force the fridge to use more energy to keep food cold.
- Lower your water heater's temperature to 120 degrees. This not only saves energy, but can prevent accidental scalding.
- Trade your traditional incandescent light bulbs—which emit more heat than light—for compact fluorescent bulbs. The new generation of fluorescents uses far less energy and fits into any overhead or lamp socket.
- Cook in the microwave instead of on the stovetop or in the oven. Keeping the kitchen cool is a big first step toward making the whole house comfortable.
- Call a service technician to give your air conditioning system—and any window units—a thorough once-

over before the weather gets hotter. A well-maintained system will run more efficiently this summer.

- Change air conditioner filters monthly from now until October.
- Close fireplace flues so cold air doesn't escape through the chimney.

## IN EMERGENCIES

During regular business hours, call:  
(254) 583-7955

These are telephone numbers to call to report outages after business hours and on weekends and holidays.

Kenneth Fikes . . . . .(254) 583-4556  
Larry Koslosky . . . . .(254) 583-4555  
Doug Matous . . . . .(254) 583-2957  
Bobby Skala . . . . .(254) 583-7219  
Ernest Martin . . . . .(254) 583-2219  
Joe W. Marek . . . . .(254) 583-4016  
James Campbell . . . . .(254) 583-2786  
Jeremy Tepe . . . . .(254) 583-2557