

A “controlled” burn can turn chaotic

A “controlled burn” can quickly become an uncontrolled one, so take precautions before burning on your land or in a ditch. Controlled burns are used for various reasons, including vegetation and weed management.

If the area you choose to burn is near a utility pole or if it spreads more quickly and farther than you thought it might, your controlled burn could get expensive.

Fire damage to a power pole is usually evident by blackening and scorch marks, but even slight discoloration can cause serious problems. In some cases, the pole can look like it has little damage on the outside, all the while burning from the inside out.

In all cases the result is the same: the utility pole is compromised and will most likely need to be replaced, compliments of the person who started the burn. The fees passed on to the person who caused it are substantial—usually in the thousands of dollars.

The damage could also cause a power outage or other serious service issues including energized lines falling near or on the ground, creating a potentially deadly situation.

So what can you do to prevent burn-related damage to a power pole?

1. Plan your burn before you begin.
2. Check the forecast for weather conditions, such as wind direction and speed, as well as humidity (generally, relative humidity should be 40 percent or higher).
3. If there are power poles in the planned burning area, clear all vegetation and weeds at least four feet around the base of the pole.
4. Wet the base of the pole with water before beginning your burn.

If your fire gets out of control, gets too close to a power pole or if the pole catches on fire, call 9-1-1 and Prairie Energy Cooperative at 515-532-2805. Once a fire breaks out, NEVER spray water near the pole, power lines or any other utility equipment. Electricity and water do not mix, and you could cause a short circuit that could cause serious injury or death.

To inquire about controlled burns (aka prescribed fire) near power lines, contact Ken Norem at 515-532-2805.



Don't let a **controlled burn** reach a power pole. The pole could **slowly burn** from the **inside out**.

Learn more at:  Safe Electricity.org

Linemen promoted

Nick Dennler and Scott Muhlenbruch were both recently promoted to lead linemen in Clarion and Garner. Nick started with Prairie Energy in 2009, and Scott started in 2013. Congratulations guys!



*Nick Dennler,
lead lineman*



*Scott
Muhlenbruch,
lead lineman*

Prairie Energy member wins August Editor's Choice contest

Congratulations to Jan Bier of Garner! Jan was randomly chosen as the winner of a Philips Airfryer with TurboStar Advance, priced at \$199.95. Look for your chance to enter and win in *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine, go to www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com/editors-choice-contest, or follow us on Facebook.



Farmers beware

In 2017, farmers ranked eighth in the list of the most dangerous jobs (civilian jobs with highest fatality rates) according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics/U.S. Dept. of Labor.

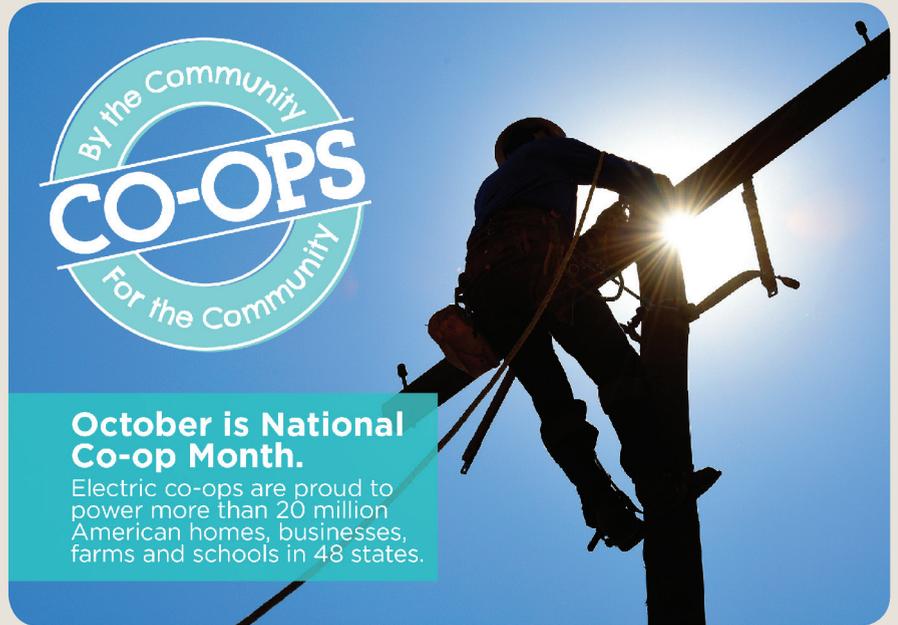
It is no wonder farmers make that list. As agriculturists are well-aware, many dangers are present in their long and demanding workdays.

We want to remind farmers that accidents related to power and electricity are also possible but in most cases they can be prevented. Especially during the busy harvest season, take the following steps to decrease the chances of an electrical-related incident:

- **Always use a spotter** when operating near lines.
- **Use care when raising augers** or the bed of grain trucks.
- **Keep equipment at least 10 feet from lines** — at all times, in all directions.
- **Inspect the height of the farm equipment** to determine clearance.
- **Always lower extensions** to the lowest setting when moving.
- **Never attempt to move a power line** or raise it for clearance.
- **If a power line is sagging or low, call us right away.**
- **If your equipment does hit a power line, do not leave the cab.** Immediately call 9-1-1, warn others to stay away and wait for the utility crew to cut the power.

Although harvest season is a time filled with tight deadlines and heightened work stress, take the time to consider electrical safety. It could save your life or the lives of others.

For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



October is National Co-op Month.

Electric co-ops are proud to power more than 20 million American homes, businesses, farms and schools in 48 states.

Respect the substation

You may live near or drive by a substation every day but not give it much thought. Although they look like something that could transform into a giant-sized, building-stomping futuristic robot, substations play an important role in providing electricity to your home and work.

Fenced-in substations are part of the electrical generation, transmission and distribution system. Transformers are contained inside many of them, and their job (as its name implies) is to transform voltage from high to low or vice versa depending on its location on the distribution path.

Besides transformers, substations usually house switches, protective devices and control equipment. In large substations, circuit breakers are used to interrupt any short circuits or overloads that may occur.

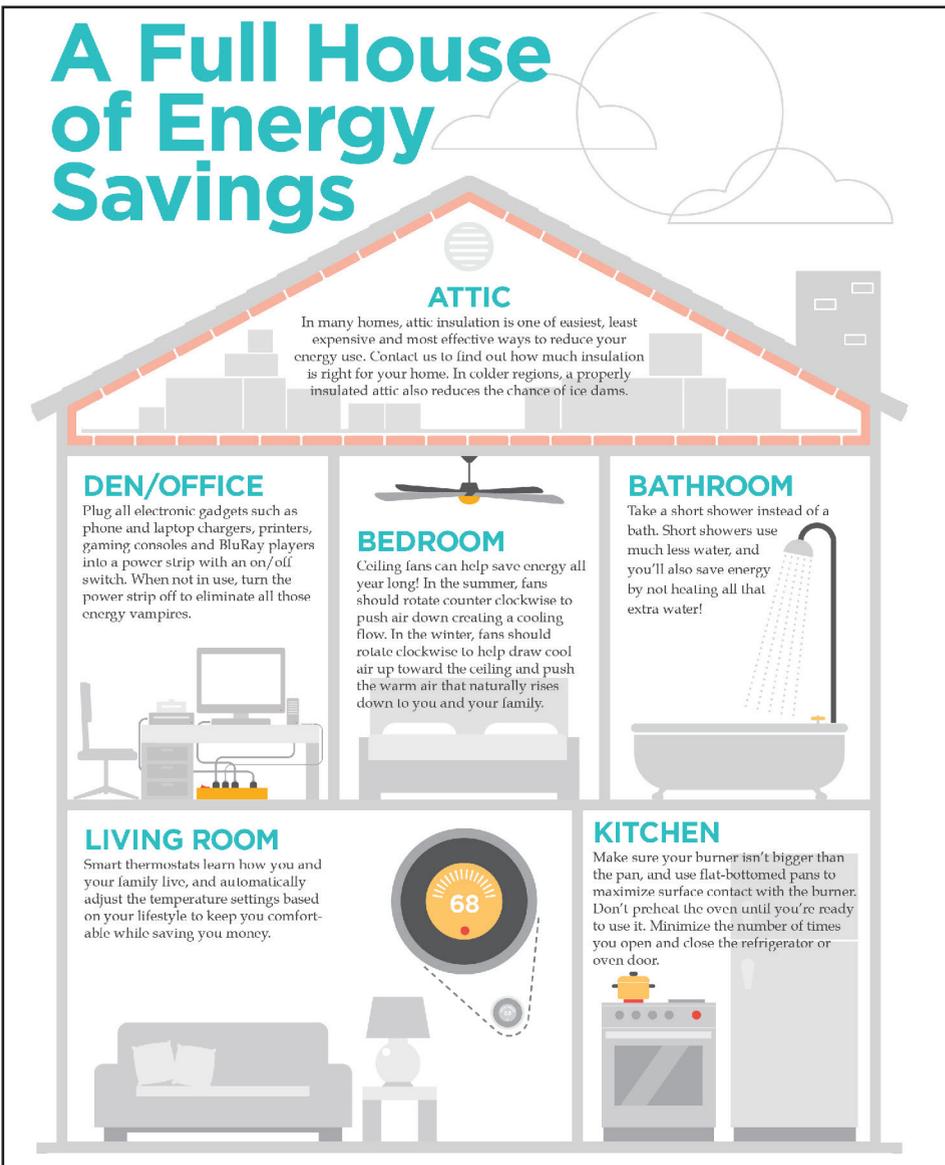
Stay safe around substations

Substations carry high voltages of electricity and they should be respected. Your cooperative and Safe Electricity remind you to:

- NEVER go near a substation.
- Teach children to NEVER go near a substation or climb its fence to retrieve a ball or pet. Let them know they should always stay away and tell a parent or adult, who should call us to report the incident.
- Teach children about the dangers of electricity from a young age.
- If a transformer catches on fire, DO NOT try to put out the fire yourself (water and electricity don't mix). Call 9-1-1.
- If you notice something unusual about a substation, transformer or power line, contact us. Never try to address a problem yourself.



A Full House of Energy Savings



Join us at the polls November 5

Providing our members with safe, reliable and affordable electricity is our first priority. This requires more than stringing and maintaining power lines.

As co-ops, the civic virtue of voting is in our DNA. We show concern for community—one of the seven cooperative principles—through participation in our democracy.

Co-ops have another advantage. Elected officials and decision-makers across the political spectrum trust us because of the work the electric cooperative family has put into political engagement. When we all get involved, we can make things happen politically and in our local communities.

Commit to casting your ballot on November 5. If you're interested in getting more involved, just give us a call or visit www.vote.coop to learn more about the upcoming elections and access online tools that can help you participate. We look forward to seeing you at the polls on Election Day!

Helping members in need this winter

Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative has always extended a helping hand to those needing it. In response to actions by the Iowa General Assembly, your REC has established RECare, a program of members helping members.

RECare will provide funds to be distributed by local community action agencies to help pay winter heating bills and to assist in weatherization of homes of low-income consumers.

You may make a monthly pledge that will be automatically added onto your electric bill—even just a dollar a month—or a one-time contribution to help others.

RECare Consumer Authorization Form

- I will contribute \$_____ per month. I understand this amount will be automatically added to my monthly electric bill.
- I will make a one-time contribution of \$_____ to RECare. My check is enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Account Number _____

Return to your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Costumes should be made of fireproof fabric and include reflectors and bright colors



Costumes should not obstruct vision or movement



Bring Flashlight or glow sticks to increase visibility



Adults should accompany children under 12. Children over 12 should go in groups and stick to familiar areas



Always cross at street corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks



Look left-right-left when crossing and keep eye contact with drivers to make sure they see you



Watch out for cars backing out of driveways



Renters can use energy wisely

Reducing electricity use as a renter may seem tough. But try the following tips:

- If your home has an individual water heater, ask to have the temperature lowered to 120 degrees.
- Install an Energy Star-qualified window air conditioner.
- Hang heavier curtains to help shield out the heat in the summertime. In the winter, tape clear plastic sheeting around window frames.
- Install sink aerators on all faucets.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with more efficient LEDs.



Slay energy vampires by unplugging unused devices

Your home is full of vampires—energy vampires, that is. Energy vampires are electric appliances and devices that continue to use energy, even when they're turned off. They're all over your home, and they can suck the life out of your energy bill, accounting for up to 20 percent of your electricity use!

Examples: cellphone chargers, laptop computers, TVs, cable or satellite boxes, DVRs and gaming consoles, automatic coffee makers and microwave ovens and other devices with digital clocks. Here's how to slay some of those pesky energy vampires in your home:

- Unplug devices that you rarely use, like your DVD player and the dusty TV in the guest room.
- Put your computers into "sleep mode" so they automatically shut down after nobody has touched them for a while.
- When you unplug your mobile phone from the charger, unplug the charger from the wall.



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