

CEO CORNER



Ryan Bartlett,
President / CEO

Prioritize Safety Year-Round

At Taylor Electric Cooperative, we recognize Electrical Safety Month every May, but we also know the importance of practicing safety year-round. We recognize that everyone—from our co-op crews to you—has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

Thousands of people across the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes, according to Electrical Safety Foundation International. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity that powers our daily lives, but we know firsthand how dangerous electricity can be because we work with it every day.

To me, safety is much more than a habit. It's a way of life.

As the manager of your cooperative, it's my responsibility to keep our employees safe, but we also want to help keep you and all members of our community safe. That's why you'll see Taylor EC hosting safety demonstrations at community events and in schools throughout the year, to demonstrate the dangers of electricity.

We discuss emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole or downed power lines. We caution students on the dangers of padmount transformers and overloading household circuits with too many electronic devices.

Here are a few practical electrical safety tips.

Replace frayed wires. Power cords can become damaged or frayed from age, heavy use or excessive current

flow. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them before they cause a shock or fire.

Avoid overloading circuits. Circuits can only cope with a certain amount of electricity. An overload happens when you draw more electricity than a circuit can safely handle—by having too many devices running on one circuit. If a fuse blows or a circuit breaker is tripped, don't just replace or reset it. Find out what caused the circuit to overload and correct the problem.

Label circuit breakers to understand the circuits in your home. Contact a qualified electrician if your home is more than 40 years old and you need to install multiple large appliances that use a lot of electricity.

Use extension cords properly. Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord, and don't exceed the wattage of the cord. Doing so risks overloading the cord and creating a fire hazard. Extension cords should be used as temporary solutions, not permanent fixes.

Make sure you have ground-fault circuit interrupters installed and that they're working properly. Many older houses were built prior to advanced electrical codes. GFCIs are especially important in parts of the home near water—in the kitchen and bathrooms and in laundry areas.

Our top priority is providing an uninterrupted energy supply 24/7, 365 days a year. But equally important is keeping our community safe around electricity.

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Summer Efficiency Upgrades To Help You Save

SPRING AND SUMMER ARE opportune times for home upgrades and DIY projects. If you're planning to make improvements to your home, consider upgrades that promote better energy efficiency.

Here are a few projects that can help you save energy and money—and increase the comfort of your home.

Installing a smart thermostat is one of the simplest ways to manage home energy use and keep summer bills in check. Smart thermostats are easy to install and allow you to control your heating and cooling system from your phone. You can purchase an Energy Star-certified smart thermostat for as little as \$100, and it can save you 8% on annual heating and cooling costs—about \$50 per year. This upgrade will quickly pay for itself, and you'll gain insight into better ways to heat and cool your home.

Additional devices like smart LED bulbs also offer convenient control and help boost energy savings at home. With smart lighting, you can set a schedule for when and how your lights turn on and off. And the next time you head out to run errands and realize you left the lights on, you can simply turn them off with your phone. Smart lights come in various shapes, colors and brightness levels—and you can purchase bulbs for indoor or outdoor use. Schedule outdoor smart lights to illuminate your home at night and when you're out of town, for better security.

While it's not as exciting as incorporating smart technologies, sealing air leaks around your home is a simple, effective way to save energy and lower your bills. Applying new (or replacing old) weatherstripping around doors and windows can instantly make your home more comfortable and reduce energy waste. Applying caulk to gaps can also improve the seal of your home.

If your home feels too warm during summer or too chilly during winter, even after you've sealed with weatherstripping and caulk, your home may need additional insulation, a more expensive efficiency upgrade. But shoring up insufficient insulation can reduce energy use and costs, so it might be an investment worth making. The cost of new insulation depends on various factors like materials, the size of your home and whether you use a contractor. Typically, the project costs can be recouped in a few years, and your home will immediately feel more comfortable. ■

POWER TIP

During summer months, cooking outdoors is a great way to save energy and eliminate unwanted heat from cooking indoors.


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NOTICE

Effective June 1, 2023, all credit/debit card transactions will be assessed a 2.45% convenience fee.

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Start Your Own Energy Audit

EVEN NEW HOMES could benefit from an energy audit that helps identify ways to reduce energy use. Certified professionals can perform energy audits, but you can start on your own to find low-cost solutions that could save you money on your monthly electric bill.

First, ask yourself if your home feels drafty and cold in the winter or stuffy and hot in the summer. If it does, then the home probably has air leakage.

To track down where those leaks are, start with the usual suspects, like damaged seals around doors and windows. If you see daylight or feel air, then apply caulk and weatherstripping to keep outdoor air where it's supposed to be.

But don't forget spots you might not immediately think of, like recessed canister lights and electrical outlets. Outlet insulation kits can be purchased inexpensively, and you can fix up your canister lights with caulk around the edges.

Also, look where walls meet the ceiling: Cobwebs mean you've got drafts.

Next, peek into the attic and inspect the insulation. How much you need depends on your climate, but keep in mind that insulation won't do its job well if you don't have a proper air barrier working in tandem. That means all joints and cracks must be sealed between your living space and insulated space.

Inspect heating and cooling systems. Check filters and replace them as needed. Generally, you should change them about every three months, especially during periods of high

usage. If the unit is more than 15 years old, consider replacing the system with a newer, more energy-efficient unit. A new unit will greatly reduce energy consumption, especially if the existing equipment is in poor condition. Check ductwork for dirt streaks, especially near seams. These indicate air leaks, and they should be sealed with duct mastic. Insulate any ducts or pipes that travel through unheated spaces. An insulation R-value of 6 is the recommended minimum for ductwork.

The appliances and electronics you choose and how you use them affect your energy use and costs. Unplugging an item when it's not in use prevents it from using electricity needlessly. Purchasing a new, more efficient product may save money and energy in the long run. Utilize smart home energy management systems to monitor and control devices.

Finally, look to your light fixtures. LEDs are more efficient than traditional incandescent lightbulbs, and they've come a long way in light quality, design and affordability. An Energy Star-rated model is estimated to use only one-quarter of the electricity consumed by traditional bulbs, and they can last for 25 years or more. As with many new technologies, the upfront cost for an LED bulb is a bit more but well worth it for the energy savings. ■

Contractor Scam Season Is Here

TAYLOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE will never send anyone to your house to ask you if you need work done. When someone does come for a legitimate reason, you'll see a uniform, a truck with the cooperative's logo on it and valid identification.

But there are lots of scammers out there who may knock on your door with ill intent. Don't be surprised if you get phone calls, uninvited visitors looking for work and loads of door hangers offering landscaping, roofing, painting and solar power services.

Your best bet: Say no to all of them. When you contact a business, you know who's on the other end of the line. But when someone contacts you first, you can't be certain they're telling the truth. You don't know if they are who they say they are. And remember, email addresses and caller ID information can be faked.

If you need work done around your house, visit the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation's website or join a contractor referral network that recommends only contractors who are licensed, insured, bonded and experienced.

A few other tips:

Be wary of contractors with out-of-state license plates or detachable, magnetic company signs on their trucks. These could be "travelers," who follow the warm weather from state to state and hire themselves out as home improvement contractors. They're almost always unlicensed in your state, and if you discover a problem with their work later, they'll be long gone.

Do not pay in cash, and do not pay upfront. Instead, work out a payment schedule that allows you to pay in increments as the work is completed. A contractor who works on a cash-only basis is probably not paying taxes and almost certainly not paying for insurance. The same goes for a contractor who wants to get paid each day. Drop them like a hot potato.

Get bids from three reputable companies before you start. If you get one offer that's way lower than the other two, something is probably amiss.

Don't fall for these two lines: "I just finished a job at your neighbor's house and I'll give you a good price if you hire me today because I'm already in the neighborhood" or "I have left-over materials from a job I just did, and I'll sell/install them here for a deep discount because I don't need them." If a contractor claims he's already got materials he wants to pass along to you at a discount, watch out. Usually, these materials are seconds, ungraded or below-grade minimums for code, or they "fell off a truck." Small contractors rarely buy in volumes that yield these big discounts. If they do, they severely misjudged quantities on a previous job, which doesn't speak well of their ability to estimate and plan jobs.

Hiring contractors can be expensive. Don't waste your money on one who's not licensed and legitimate. ■

