



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 
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FLINT HILLS RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

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View Flint Hills RECA Annual Meeting Photos Online

Thanks to all the members who attended our Annual Meeting on March 23.

See next month's magazine for pictures and highlights of this year's meeting or go to our Web site at www.flinthillsrec.com for an early preview.



Spring into Electrical Safety with your Children

National Safe Kids Week April 25–May 3

At this time of year, many adults and children are spending more time outdoors to enjoy the springtime weather. In light of National Safe Kids Week, occurring April 25-May 3, Flint Hills RECA encourages everyone to learn how to protect themselves from electrical hazards outdoors, and to share this information with children.

“Children often do not understand the danger of electricity and electrical equipment,” said Bill Wesel, Member Services Manager for Flint Hills RECA. “In their innocent and imaginative minds, what can be potentially dangerous may go unnoticed, or even appear enticing and fun. Take an opportunity to point out overhead power lines and any other electrical equipment to children and explain what they are.”

Flint Hills RECA recommends teaching children to follow these

rules:

- ▶ **Never climb trees near power lines.** Even if the power lines aren't touching the tree, they could touch when more weight is added to the branch.
- ▶ **Kites and model airplanes should only be flown during good weather conditions in large open areas like a open park or a wide field.** They should stay away from overhead power lines or other electrical equipment such as substations. If a kite gets stuck in a tree that's near power lines, don't climb up to get it. Electricity can travel down kite strings or wires. Contact your electric utility for assistance.
- ▶ **Never climb a utility pole or tower.** The electricity carried through this equipment is extremely high voltage and could kill you.
- ▶ **Don't play on or around pad-mounted electrical equipment.**

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Small Changes add up to Big Savings

Sometimes the little things in life mean a lot. Simple steps such as turning off lights when you leave a room, unplugging appliances when you're not using them, and raising the temperature on your thermostat as our weather warms up, when done together, can help your family rack up big energy savings.

At Flint Hills RECA, we're always looking for ways to help you, our members. With energy costs rising due to a growing demand for electricity, higher power plant costs, and federal regulations, energy efficiency remains a key part of our efforts to keep rates affordable. Best of all, energy efficiency—simply making the electricity you use do more—saves you money.

Because we're part of the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives network, you have access to a valuable resource that not only identifies simple energy-saving tasks but also illustrates the real-dollar savings they produce, specific to your home. TogetherWeSave.com uses real savings calculations—based on our co-op's rates and climate zone—to motivate and inspire small changes in behavior.]

Intrigued? Check it out at www.TogetherWeSave.com. You'll be asked for your ZIP code; this helps us provide accurate electricity rates for your home.



Flint Hills RECA encourages you to see how making little changes can add up on your electricity bill by visiting www.TogetherWeSave.com.

The Virtual Home Tour provides a good starting point. As you move through each of the six rooms, clicking on areas highlighted in yellow prompts you to take various interactive energy-saving measures and shows how these changes translate into savings on your electric bill.

A visit to the attic, for example, recommends adding insulation. Slide the arrow up the scale to add extra inches of insulation and watch the exciting end result. Adding nine inches saves up to \$143 a year. Add 15 inches, and that figure jumps to \$241.

Now head downstairs to the living room. Most folks enjoy watching television and playing Wii or Xbox games, but you don't need these gadgets on 24 hours a day. By unplugging entertainment center devices when they're not in use, you could save up to \$174 every year. Seems simple enough—and every

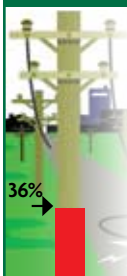
small step adds up to big savings. In fact, just lowering your thermostat one degree in winter could save \$82.

The Web site uses calculations targeted for our co-op's kWh electric rate and geographic location. In short, it gives you an accurate reflection of what your potential savings could be if you implement suggested steps.]

Want more in-depth information on energy efficiency? TogetherWeSave.com also includes a library of short videos on various topics.

Finding ways to help you save energy dollars during tough times is important to us. Valuable tools like TogetherWeSave.com are just one more way we at Flint Hills RECA are looking out for you. Want to learn about other ways to make your home more energy efficient? Visit www.flinthillsrec.com or call us at 620-767-5144.

FEMA Restoration Update



As of March 1, Flint Hills RECA has completed 177 miles of our 492 miles of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) rebuild work. Just 315 miles remain.

CO-OP Connections Update		Have you taken advantage of your Connections Card yet?	
	Prescriptions Filled	Savings to Flint Hills' Members	
February	21	\$342.52	
2010 Total	35	\$494.31	

Spring into Electrical Safety with your Children

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These are often green metal “box” transformers on cement pads.

- **Never go into an electric substation for any reason—even on a dare.** Electric substations contain high-voltage equipment, even raising your hand inside one can cause an arc that may result in an electric shock. Never attempt to retrieve a pet, ball or any toy from these areas. Call Flint Hills RECA instead.
- **Immediately seek shelter if lightning or thunder is present while playing outdoors.**
- **When designing a tree house or outdoor play area for children, take preventive precautions before starting your project.** Do not install playground equipment or swimming pools underneath or near power lines. Installation of either will require some digging; be sure to call your local underground utility locating service to have buried lines marked so you can avoid serious injury and damage.
- **Protect all family members from serious shock and injuries by installing Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) on outdoor outlets and in interior room where water is present.** GFCIs shut off power instantly if they detect a problem. Use portable GFCIs for outdoor outlets that don't have them. GFCIs are affordably priced and found at hardware stores.
- **Be careful using electrical appliances outdoors, even if plugged into GFCI-equipped outlets.** Never touch an electrical appliance while in a pool or hot tub and keep all electrical appliances at least 10 feet away from pools, ponds and wet surfaces. Teach your kids that it is never safe to swim in a pool or lake when a storm is brewing. Also keep in mind that you should never use appliances with extension cords that are frayed or damaged, and always be sure the ground prong is intact.

“Water often attracts kids, but water and electricity never mix,” warns Wessel. “Teach older children to exercise caution before plugging in a radio, CD player, or any electrical gadget outdoors, and never leave any electrical appliances outside.”

When you are done using a radio, CD player or any other electrical gadget outdoors, bring it inside with you. If it rains, the electrical device could get wet and cause an electrical shock when used later.

“Spring showers bring more than tempting puddles for kids to splash in, they can also leave electric hazards behind,” Wessel added. “Flooded areas are never safe spots to wade or play in, and may be in contact with energized electrical equipment or fallen power lines.”

Make sure all of your family members know to stay away from downed power lines and wires, and tell children to report any fallen or dangling wires to an adult. Downed power lines are extremely dangerous for children as well as adults. Always assume that any power line is fully charged and stay far away. Call Flint Hills RECA immediately if you or your child encounters a downed power line, and include this number with other posted emergency phone numbers.

Be Careful When Tackling Home Wiring Projects

If spring sends you into remodeling mode, consider checking with professionals before you migrate to the nearest hardware store. While do-it-yourself (DIY) projects can be very satisfying to complete, they pose risks when it comes to electricity.

An ongoing study by the Fire Protection Research Foundation has given UL engineers a better understanding of typical DIY wiring mistakes. The most common:

1. Working with a Live Wire

It may seem perfectly obvious, but thousands of DIYers receive electric shock injuries each year. Always turn off the circuit breaker (or remove the fuse) before working on or replacing electrical equipment.

2. Using the Wrong Light Bulb

Most lighting fixtures feature a sticker on the socket that tells you the proper type and maximum wattage of the light bulb to use. Installing a different type of bulb, or one with higher wattage, will not only make the room brighter, but could also damage the lights and cause a fire. Heat is usually the catalyst in this case: the higher the wattage, the hotter the bulb and the hotter the wire that goes to the lighting fixture.

3. Not Being Grounded

For optimal safety, receptacles should be wired with the proper grounding and polarity. Generally, three-pronged outlets signify an effective ground path in the circuit.

If you are uncertain about whether your home's wiring is grounded, inexpensive UL-listed outlet circuit testers are available to check for proper grounding and polarity. If your outlet is improperly grounded, call an electrician before moving forward in any project.

4. Splicing, Splicing, Splicing

Always make sure your wiring size and type match. Splicing wires by simply twisting them together and covering them with electrical tape is rarely a good idea. Instead, use wiring suitable to your home's wiring and place wiring connections in metal or plastic boxes to decrease fire risk.

Other guidelines apply, so if you expect to do any splicing, seek professional help before you begin.

5. Hooking new Lights to old Wires

Most light fixtures are marked with instructions for supply connections, such as “Use wire rated for at least 90C,” which refers to the maximum temperature—90 degrees Celsius—under which a wire's insulation can safely be used. Again, if you have an older home (pre-1984, in this case), wiring may have a lower temperature rating than a new luminaire.

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