

POWERLINE Press

A Monthly Publication of:



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Electrical Storms Can Be Deadly

“Lightning never strikes twice in the same place.” “You have more of a chance of getting struck by lightning. . .” These often-repeated sayings give the impression that lightning strikes are extremely rare, predictable and avoidable. This idea, however, is wrong.

Although seemingly less dangerous, lightning kills more people per year than either tornados or hurricanes and causes billions of dollars in damage. Given these statistics, it’s extremely important to take lightning seriously and to stay educated on lightning safety.

“Plan outdoor activities around the weather and be prepared to seek shelter if the weather turns threatening,” says Molly Hall, Safe Electricity executive director. “If thunderstorms and lightning are approaching, the safest location is indoors away from doors and windows. Avoid water, electric appliances and other objects that could conduct electricity, and use only cordless or cell phones to make emergency calls.”

Phone use is the leading cause of indoor lightning injuries in the United States. A direct strike is not necessary for lightning voltage to enter your home through phone lines, electrical wires, cables and plumbing.

Other recommendations to avoid lightning shock and damage indoors include:

- Turn off and unplug appliances well before a storm nears — never during.
- Stay away from electrical outlets, appliances, computers, power tools, and TV sets. Take off headsets and stop playing video games.
- Avoid water and contact with piping, including sinks, baths and faucets. Don’t wash dishes, shower or bathe during a thunderstorm. Also avoid washers and dryers since they not only connect with the plumbing and electrical systems, but also contain an electrical path from the outside through the dryer vent.
- Do not lie on the concrete floor of a garage as it likely contains a wire mesh.
- Basements typically are a safe place to go during thunderstorms, but avoid concrete walls that may contain metal rebar.

Lightning can strike up to 10 miles from the area in which it is raining. This means that if you can hear thunder, you’re within striking distance. A good idea is to use the “30-30 Rule.” According to this rule, if you can count less than 30 seconds between a lightning flash and the thunder following it, you should seek shelter from the storm. When the storm is over, wait 30 minutes after the last lightning strike you see before going back outside.

If caught outdoors during a thunderstorm and unable to take shelter in a building, take the following precautions:

- Try to take shelter in a vehicle with a solid metal roof. Close the windows and avoid contact with electrical conducting paths, such as the steering wheel, ignition, gear shifter, or radio.
- Avoid water, high ground, or open spaces.
- Do not seek shelter under tall, solitary trees; canopies; small picnic or rain shelters; or in any open-frame vehicles such as jeeps, convertibles, golf carts, tractors or mowers.
- Do not stand near power, light or flag poles, machinery, fences, gates, metal bleachers, or even other people. If you are in a group, spread out so that you are at least 20 feet apart.
- If you are outside and your skin tingles or you hear crackling sounds, this could signal that lightning is about to strike. Drop immediately into a crouching position and make yourself as small as possible with minimal contact with the ground.
- If a person is struck by lightning, call 911 and care for the victim immediately. You are not in danger of being electrocuted by the victim.

More information on lightning safety can be found at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Web site at www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov. Also visit www.SafeElectricity.org for more electrical safety information.

Safe Electricity is a safety public awareness program created and supported by a coalition of several dozen organizations, including electric utilities, educators, and others committed to promoting electrical safety.

RURAL
M I S S O U R I

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Doug Rye Says... Good news – no more ice!

Great news — winter has come and gone and the flowers are beautiful. More good news — the government will help many of you pay for some of the things that I have been teaching you.

As I write this column, I have just completed appearing at a home show in Kentucky. I am preparing to conduct an energy-efficiency seminar at a community college in Tennessee tonight. I will then drive to south Arkansas for a seminar and then to Illinois for a seminar and radio show. I have had great difficulty in deciding how to write this column because there is so very much that I wish to teach you. However, I am allowed only one page.

I went down this morning for breakfast in the motel lobby and asked if I could have a late check-out since my seminar was not until 5 p.m. at the college. The lady at the desk asked, "Are you the caulk man?" To which I answered, "Yes, I am the King of Caulk and Talk. How did you know?"

"I received a brochure in the mail about the meeting from our power company and I plan to be there because my electric bills have really gone up this year," she said.

I told her that she has two choices: Do something about it or just keep complaining. I proceeded to give her a personal one-hour seminar and answer her questions. Before we had finished, several others in the area had joined the group.

Folks, every indication is that utility rates will continue to increase. With a slowing economy, utility bills will become a larger percentage of a family's budget. You have two choices: Use less or use less.



Some of you are thinking, "This man is a genius." Others are thinking, "This man is a moron." Probably, both of you are correct. I have spent my entire adult life teaching others how to use less by conservation and energy efficiency.

Example: Turning off the light is conservation, but installing a compact fluorescent bulb is energy efficiency.

Now for the other great news. I am happy to announce that it is now more feasible to make energy improvements than ever before. The Stimulus Bill signed by the president on Feb. 17 allows for impressive tax credits to help pay for energy improvements. Please understand I am not your tax advisor, but I suggest that you go to www.energystar.gov for details.

Please note that these are tax credits, which may be worth far more than tax deductions. Please note that there are tax credits for windows, insulation, solar systems, wind systems, and the best news of all, geothermal heat pumps. You can now install the best heating and cooling system available and you may qualify for a tax credit of 30 percent of the total cost on your 2009 tax return.

My friends, this is huge. Many of you have installed geothermal, with no tax advantages, because you knew it was the smart thing to do. Well, now it is cost effective for many more of you to do the same. I consider that to be really, really good news.

Doug Rye, a licensed architect living in Arkansas and the popular host of the "Home Remedies" radio show, works as a consultant for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas to promote energy efficiency to cooperative members statewide. To order Doug's video, call Doug at 1-888-Doug-Rye. More energy-efficiency tips can also be found at www.ecark.org.

Employee Anniversaries

The Cooperative would like to say a special thanks to the following employees who have June anniversaries.



Terry Bunting has served the Cooperative for 22 years and is a Serviceman



Connie Hooper has served the Cooperative for 19 years and is Sr. Customer Service Clerk



Reuben Jeane has served the Cooperative for 18 years and is our General Manager



Peggy Evans has served the Cooperative for 16 years and works in the Warehouse



Ron Montgomery has served the Cooperative for 10 years and is the Warehouse/Purchasing Manager

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING

April 20, 2009

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of SEMO Electric Cooperative was held Monday, April 20, 2009, at the Cooperative office in Sikeston, Missouri. Rick Faulkner, President, called the meeting to order at 12:50 p.m. with the invocation being lead by Tim Coppage. The following board members were present: Rick Faulkner, John Bledsoe, Tim Coppage, James Deneke, Clyde Hawes, Charles Marshall, Carl Eftink, Butch Dirnberger, Jerry Moore, Dicky Hanor, Keith Haynes, and Dennis Fowler. Also in attendance was Reuben L. Jeane, General Manager, acting as secretary and staff members.

The Board President called for amendments to the agenda. Motion was made and seconded to add Minutes of the Nominating Committee. Motion carried.

Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2009, meeting as printed.

Motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the 2009 Nominating Committee. Motion carried.

STAFF PRESENTATIONS

Randal Tennison, Financial Manager, then gave the monthly financial report. The year-to-date operating revenue was \$6.5 million, approximately \$300,000 under budget. Cost of purchased power showed a decrease of \$250,000. Other expenses were well within budgeted expectations, showing that year-to-date margins were \$542,012, which was \$434,462 above budget. A review of the balance sheet showed total assets being \$93.5 million. The Cooperative has an additional \$18 million to pay for repairs due to the ice storm and funds received from FEMA will be used to pay off those short term loans. A review of key statistics showed that the Cooperative remains in a strong financial position with interest on long-term debt in line with other cooperatives and total equity as a percentage of assets being 51.4%. Electronic disbursements were reviewed as well as the directors' and General Manager's expenses. The General Manager then gave reports for member services, engineering and operations due to those individuals being unavailable. The conversion to IVUE, the new customer service information system, is going well. Total rebates year-to-date was 30. The operations report showed 89 outages and 56 work orders completed. All irrigation services were restored except where the owners have not completed their portion. There will be doing a blitz to finish repairing mercury vapor light services. A safety meeting was held concerning proper care and cleaning of live line tools and care of climbing gear. Ron Montgomery then gave the warehouse/shop report informing the Board that transmission repairs were done on truck numbers 79 and 80. Material inventory is still too large and excess material is in the process of being returned to the suppliers. The human resource report showed one lineman injured on the job and another one during the storm. There are seven inactive employees. The engineering report showed 149 work orders created during March. The AMI project is back on track. Services continue to be repaired that were destroyed during the ice storm. Glen Cantrell then gave the communications report concerning the youth tour, scholarships and legislative update. After a full discussion of all reports, motion was duly made, seconded and carried that the staff reports be accepted.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

After the staff left the meeting, the General Manager was then called upon to give his monthly report to the Directors. The General Manager handed out a report as prepared by AMEC personnel on the availability cost of cooperative's within the State of Missouri. Over the last five years, SEMO Electric has had the fourth lowest rate increase of all Missouri electric cooperatives and is currently the fifth lowest in the monthly availability charge for residential rates. The General Manager informed the Board that rate analysis studies will need to be done in the future due to the impact of rates, wholesale increases and the need for services. The Board was informed of the continuation of the collection of FEMA documentation and requests for conductor replacement and permanence repairs. He also informed the Board that irrigation controls are in the process of being replaced. Labor union negotiations with IBEW will begin very soon with the lineman's contract expiring this summer. The General Manager also reported on preliminary plans and agenda for the annual meeting coming up on May 21, 2009. Following a complete discussion of the General Manager's report, motion was made and seconded to accept the report. Motion carried.

POWER SUPPLY REPORT

The Board president then called on Clyde Hawes to give the power supply report. Mr. Hawes informed the Board on the current work at M & A and Associated Electric to repair the major transmission lines damaged during the ice storm and also on the recent changes in cost to the power supply.

AMEC REPORT

John Bledsoe then gave the AMEC report informing the Board on the previous meeting. Following his report, motion was made, seconded and carried that the power supply report and the AMEC report be accepted.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to be brought before the Board.

NEW BUSINESS

Motion was made for membership action to be taken to receive new members and to cancel memberships with those members who have been disconnected. Motion was seconded and carried.

Membership concerns were then discussed. A member complained about line extension costs to grain bins. The General Manager was asked to review the reasoning for these costs.

Following a short executive session and there being no other business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Tim Coppage, Secretary

Richard Faulkner, President