

## Home Electrical Safety Basics

May is National Electrical Safety Month. Follow these tips to make sure your home is as electrically safe as possible.

Part of our safety commitment at Boone Electric Cooperative is to remind members that electricity is dangerous as it runs along power lines and that people should stay away.

However, electricity can also be very dangerous if not treated with respect inside your home. Spend a few minutes each year inspecting the condition of the electrical system in your home. Because May is National Electrical Safety Month, there isn't a better time of the year to do it.

Signs of home electrical wiring problems include:

- \* household lights that dim or flicker, or a television picture that shrinks in size
- \* evidence of arcs, sparks or flashes of bright light in the electrical system
- \* sizzling or buzzing sounds emanating from the electrical system
- \* damaged, cut, broken or cracked wire insulation
- \* frequent blown fuses or circuit breakers that trip frequently

Take notice of any switch plates that are discolored, which could indicate that the electrical wiring behind

### Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter Safety

Did you know you should regularly check the ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) in your home. (GFCIs are those funny little buttons on electrical outlets, typically those near the bathroom and kitchen sink.)

The GFCI test is simple:

1. Plug a nightlight into a GFCI-protected outlet and turn it on.
2. Press the "TEST" button; the light should turn off.
3. Press the "RESET" button; the light should turn on.
4. If the light does not go out when the "TEST" button is pressed, discontinue use of the circuit and contact a qualified electrician to correct the problem.

the plate is overheating. Check switch plates to see if they are warm.

Nearly two-thirds of all electrical fires are caused by worn or damaged cords. Be sure to check the cords in your home on a regular basis.

- \* Replace any electrical cords in poor condition.
- \* Make sure all electrical plugs fit properly into the outlet. Plugs that are loose are a potential hazard and should be replaced or repaired.
- \* Do not force a three-prong plug into a two-slot outlet. Appliances with three-prong plugs should only be inserted into three-slot outlets or three-slot extension cords.
- \* Do not overload any circuit or extension cord. Also remember that extension cords are not intended for permanent use.

*The Electrical Safety Foundation International contributed information for this article.*

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Be sure your children know about being safe around electricity. Two websites offer good information for parents and teachers. Visit [www.safeelectricity.org](http://www.safeelectricity.org) or Kids Corner at [www.electrical-safety.org](http://www.electrical-safety.org).

*Boone Electric Cooperative will be closed Monday, May 31, in observance of Memorial Day.*

## Member Information

### Community Support Programs You Can Add to Your Bill

**Operation Round-Up**  
Helps fund the Boone Electric Community Trust, which provides financial assistance to charitable organizations in BEC's service territory.

**C.A.S.H.**  
Provides utility assistance to low-income senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Funds administered by City/County Health Department.

**H.E.L.P.**  
Provides utility assistance to low-income families with children. Funds administered by City/County Health Department.



Published by:  
**Boone Electric Cooperative**

1413 Rangeline Street  
Columbia, Missouri 65201  
(573) 449-4181  
Outside the local calling area:  
(800) 225-8143  
www.booneelectric.coop  
comments@booneelectric.com

G.M. & CEO • Todd Culley  
Editor • Christi Miller  
Editor • Jim Robertson  
Editor • Jessica Spencer

**Board of Directors:**  
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# The Gelders' Menagerie

*Walk About Acres is a popular, and vocal, stop for student tour groups.*



The loud call of the brilliant-blue peacock caused the small group of preschoolers to shriek with laughter and cover their ears. Their shrieking only generated more calls from the peacock and the tom turkeys sharing the large enclosure. It was a vicious cycle, really. And the kids loved it.

The noisy fowl belong to Vera and Art Gelder at their Walk About Acres. The tickled youngsters were part of a Mommy's Morning Out group touring this

diversified farm arranged specifically for educational tours.

The Gelders, both Iowa farm kids originally, moved to this acreage north-east of Columbia in 1992. While raising three children in town, the couple missed the farm and wanted to retire to property outside city limits. "Now we laugh that 'retire' means tired today and re-tired tomorrow," Vera explains behind the perpetual smile from someone who fully enjoys what they do.

"We started with just chickens," she says. "I saw an ad for free chickens in the paper. That first morning the rooster crowed at 4 a.m. I thought at the time, well, you wanted chickens and now you've got them. It's funny that now I don't even notice the noise."

The Gelders, each holding jobs in town, knew they needed to find a way to generate revenue if this small farm was



*A three-day-old goat was an obvious favorite stop for this group of preschool visitors to Walk About Acres.*

## Member Information

going to work. Family and friends talked so highly about enjoying the chickens that Vera and Art added to their menagerie.

Next came the bees, with Art joining several local and state beekeeping associations. He was working in the beekeepers booth at the Missouri State Fair in the late 1990s when a Columbia grade school teacher asked if she could bring her class on a field trip. That simple request began an agri-tourism business that last year hosted more than 2,500 students.

A dozen bee colonies in bee boxes sit out behind the barn, but aren't part of the tour. Instead, the Gelders turn the bees' sweet honey into another revenue source, through a variety of honey products, including honey ice cream and creamed honey in a variety of flavors.

Art kept 55 colonies in all last year, explaining that all but the dozen at home were spread throughout the area so the bees can fertilize clover fields, melon patches and vegetable gardens for other families. As with many Midwestern beekeepers, the extra-cold winter was costly; the couple lost as much as 30 percent of their bee colonies. However in mid-April the Gelders expected to receive a new crop of bees. Most colonies do not produce honey their first year, so the couple will rely on their remaining colonies to create the sweetness that goes into the honey products.

In addition to the aforementioned peacocks and turkeys, the farm also is home to a dozen emus, a number of rabbits and a pasture-full of goats. The goats are protected by a llama and, at least in his mind, by a cat



*Vera Gelder explains why she put holes in the bottom of this cup containing a newly planted zinnia seed. Vera teaches tour groups how important honey bees are to the pollination of plants and how the bees use nectar from those plants and flowers to produce honey.*

who has taken up residence in the pasture. At one time the Gelders milked the goats, making cheese with the product. A busy tour schedule now makes milking twice a day a challenge, but the couple hopes to get back to the milk soon.

The Gelders sell Walk About Acres honey products, plus peacock feathers and feather pens, each week at the Columbia Farmers Market. The couple has also sold emu meat and a variety of pork cuts at the market. These items are also for sale at the farm, as well as numerous bee-themed items from books to shelf sitters and other decorations.

"Everything just fell into place for us to be doing this," Vera says. "And now we know we're doing what we're supposed to be doing."



*In addition to planting a flower seed during their tour, students also make a wax candle.*



# Let Your Voice Be Heard, Again

*Co-op grassroots campaign aims to stop the Environmental Protection Agency from using the Clean Air Act to regulate carbon dioxide.*



Todd Culley  
General Manager/  
CEO

Over the last few years electric cooperative members have been asked to urge their elected officials in Washington D.C. to make smart choices regarding electric rates. Thousands of you contacted our senators and representatives via a provided postcard or through web-based letters.

The Our Energy, Our Future campaign is a classic grassroots effort. Not just Missouri's contingency, but elected officials from across the country heard from more than 500,000 co-op members. Thankfully, the initial campaign was successful.

Legislators heard you loud and clear.

Last month we asked you to speak up again. When climate change legislation stalled in Congress, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began taking steps to regulate carbon dioxide under the federal Clean Air Act. The EPA's actions could potentially have a dramatic effect on what you and all co-op members pay for electricity.

The Clean Air Act is not intended to deal with carbon dioxide. Even the author of the legislation, Michigan Congressman John Dingell, admits that. The Act was originally passed 40 years ago to control specific pollutants on a local and regional basis. In 2007, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that the term "pollutant" in the Clean Air Act includes carbon dioxide, and left it up to the EPA to decide whether or not to take any action.

Two members of Missouri's House delegation – representatives Ike Skel-

ton and Jo Ann Emerson, along with House Ag Chairman Collin Peterson (D-MN) – have introduced bipartisan legislation to stop the EPA from using the Clean Air Act in such a fashion. In early April, Representative Blaine Luetkemeyer offered his support to the legislation introduced by Skelton and Emerson. Two similar efforts are being spearheaded by Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-N.D.) and Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska).

This country's electric cooperatives endorse the efforts of Congress to limit the EPA's regulatory oversight with regard to this issue.

Electric cooperatives support this bipartisan effort because we are concerned too about the unintended consequences from oversight by the EPA. Cooperatives support a legislative solution (rather than regulatory), which will ensure less dramatic rate increases potentially tied to carbon.

More than 1,200 of you have responded thus far, either by returning the postcard we included with your April bill or by logging onto [www.ourenergy.coop](http://www.ourenergy.coop). (And as of this writing, half of the BEC membership has not received their April billing.) The postcards are being hand delivered to Capital Hill this month during the electric cooperative legislative rally.

Affordable electric bills must be at the heart of this debate. We're fighting on behalf of our members to keep energy affordable and reliable in the future.

I hope to have an update for you soon as this interesting regulatory wrestling match plays out.

*Affordable electric bills must be at the heart of this debate.*



## Touchstone Energy

Boone Electric Cooperative is a member of Touchstone Energy, a national alliance of local, member-owned electric cooperatives providing a high standard of service to customers large and small.

In order to qualify as a Touchstone Energy partner, electric cooperatives must be active members of their community and be dedicated to serving all customers with integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to their community.