

WHITE RIVER ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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White River Electric

Association, Inc., strives to provide its member-consumers with safe, reliable and responsible electric energy and other services at the most reasonable costs possible while remaining committed to customer and community service.



Finding a Way to Give Back

BY ALAN MICHALEWICZ
GENERAL MANAGER

With the holiday season upon us and the new year just around the corner, I can't help but reflect on the gratitude I feel for being able to live here. I think most will agree this has been a year like no other — certainly in my lifetime — and while we've seen our share of challenges, I am heartened by the ways in which we have all pulled together to weather this storm.

In keeping with tradition, Meeker residents are preparing for the upcoming holiday season in hopes that brighter days are ahead. Each year, we have the opportunity to participate in the Giving Tree program, which allows us to help fill the void for children whose parents might not be able to provide Christmas gifts for their families. If you swing into Meeker Drugs each November, you'll be met by a Christmas tree filled with "adoptable ornaments." Those ornaments detail the wish list for underprivileged children whose parents are allowing us to help in trying times. I'm witness to White River Electric Association staff and board of directors who anonymously contribute to the program, by pooling their money so they can adopt multiple ornaments each year. In a true "small-town spirit" we recognize that, just as our consumer-members support us, we must offer support back, and we are honored to do so. I'm grateful for a staff and board that generously share their good fortune.

But giving doesn't always have to come from the pocketbook. In a year where budget cuts have been brought front and center, we've all been forced to re-evaluate our priorities and determine how we can give back without breaking the bank. Consider volunteerism.

Volunteerism is the gift that keeps on giving. While it's difficult to quantify the



ALAN J. MICHALEWICZ

impact volunteers have, I do know they make a tremendous difference in our community and make our corner of the world a better place to live and visit. Many organizations depend on volunteers to fulfill their mission. The Meeker Classic, Range Call and HopeWest all rely on volunteers to help meet their goals and to enrich our community. We rely on these organizations to stimulate our local economy, shed a bright light on our history and tradition and provide care and compassion to those who are facing end of life. Our local volunteers must not be undervalued and they make an impact on every organization they serve.

Because we are a co-op, volunteerism and giving back are a part of who we are and we feel fortunate that it's mirrored in so many of our employees — not by force, but by choice. Throughout the year, many of our co-op staff serve on local boards, volunteer for search and rescue, coach youth sports and participate in events to better serve our local youth. This volunteerism comes from a place of gratitude and is an investment in Meeker and its citizens. I am proud of the work they do — on and off the time clock.

As we flip our calendars to 2021, it's not likely that our struggles will magically disappear. We will need to work toward brighter days for our nation, our state and our community. In the meantime, White River Electric will continue to focus on how to best serve its consumer-members and encourage its employees so that we can all continue to give back. On behalf of all of us at White River Electric, merry Christmas and happy New Year.

HIT THE ROAD SAFELY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The winter holiday season is a busy time of year for many of us. Along with putting out decorations and baking cookies, we often spend more time in our cars than usual: shopping for presents, traveling to family gatherings or attending holiday events. However, all that time in the car can also mean facing extreme weather conditions that make safe driving difficult.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, winter weather conditions, such as snow, sleet and slush, cause more than 550,000 traffic accidents each year, leading to approximately 138,000 injuries and 1,700 fatalities.

Along with risk of injury and damage to your vehicle, collisions may also involve downed power lines or other electrical hazards. Unfortunately, when this happens, it adds another very significant danger to the mix that can cause severe shock, burns or electrocution. Knowing what to do in this situation can save lives.

If you are in an accident involving a downed power line:

- Call 911 and tell the dispatcher a downed power line or other electrical equipment is involved. Power company personnel will be dispatched to the scene to deenergize the power.
- Put your window down and alert others not to approach the scene. They could be shocked or electrocuted if they walk or run over the energized area or touch anything that is energized.
- Never attempt to drive over a power line or through water, snow or other

debris that could be hiding one. There is no way to tell if a power line is energized, even if it is not sparking or buzzing.

- Do not exit the vehicle unless the vehicle is on fire or you see smoke. The vehicle acts as an insulator that keeps you safe from stray electricity.
- If you must exit the vehicle, cross your arms across your chest, put your feet together, and make a clean jump from the vehicle. Then hop with feet together as far as you can, but at least 50 feet away. Once a power line is in contact with a car or truck, the ground or other objects, it energizes the area. The electrical current spreads to the vehicle and ground, and it ripples out. Each “ring” of the ripple represents a different voltage. Stepping from one voltage to the next can cause your body to become a path for electricity and electrocute you.
- If a power line is inside the vehicle due to damage or an open window, stay in the vehicle. Do not touch or try to move the wire, and do not attempt to use other objects to move it.
- If your vehicle collides with a pad-mounted transformer, which houses electrical equipment connected to underground power lines, the same safety precautions apply.

Keep your family safe while on the road this holiday season. For more information about safety around electricity, visit SafeElectricity.org.

KNOW WHAT TO DO

if in an Auto Accident with Power Lines

If the car you are in hits a utility pole, your vehicle and the surrounding area can become energized.



Even if you do not touch lines or equipment, you can still be killed or seriously injured. 

1. Do NOT leave the car, and warn others to stay away.

2. Call 911 to have the utility notified. 

3. Wait until a utility professional has told you it is safe.

*The **only** reason to exit the vehicle is if it's on fire.*



If the car is on fire, jump clear of the vehicle: with feet together, and without touching the car and the ground at the same time. 

Continue to **hop away** with your **feet together** as far as you can. 

Learn more at SafeElectricity.org



Plug into Presents that Pay Off with Year-Round Safety

BY DERRILL HOLLY

During the holiday season, many of us turn our attention to gift giving, and while the shiny, trendy and pricey may make a big splash when the unwrapping's done, practical gifts can leave lasting impressions. What's more, they can make a difference by enhancing safety and improving security.

Here are a few practical gift ideas that can make a difference in reducing safety risks year-round.

Smoke detectors. Most of us have at least one in our home, but experts say that's not enough. The National Fire Protection Association recommends that a working smoke detector be installed in every bedroom, on every level of a home and in hallways outside of sleeping areas. And if smoke detectors are more than 10 years old, they should be replaced.

Carbon monoxide alarms. Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a colorless, odorless gas created by incomplete consumption of fuels like gasoline, wood, natural gas, propane, oil, coal or methane. The gas is highly toxic, so having CO detectors outside of sleeping areas and on every level of a home improves overall safety. Local fire departments in the United States respond to about 80,000 CO incidents each year. The National Fire Protection Association also recommends that fuel-burning heating equipment and cooking appliances be professionally inspected once per year to reduce the risks of malfunction and detect structural problems early.

Extension cords. They are:

- Not all created equal
- Subject to wear
- Subject to specific use guidelines
- Never recommended for permanent use

Brittle and cracked plastic can indicate heat damage, and exposed wires or frayed connections increase risks of shocks, shorts or fires. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, an extension cord that's warm or hot to the touch is a good indication that it's not designed to safely do the job. Consider giving an assortment of extension cords designed for indoor or outdoor use and, before you buy, look for the label of a nationally recognized testing laboratory like Underwriters Laboratories, CSA International or Intertek.

Arc fault circuit interrupters. Arcing and sparking are among indications that a home's electrical wiring needs service. Arc fault circuit interrupters help address electrical fire hazards before they



▣ A smoke detector is a gift that keeps on giving.

occur. Properly installed by a licensed electrician, AFCIs can often replace circuit breakers in an existing electrical panel box. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that the work be completed by a qualified electrician because the installation involves working inside the electrical panel box, which carries current even when main circuit breakers are turned off.

Ground fault circuit interrupters. While AFCIs are designed to help prevent electrical fire hazards, ground fault circuit interrupters are designed to help prevent shocks. Older homes may have just one, typically in an area where electric outlets are relatively close to a water source. But over the years, the National Electrical Code has been amended to require their use for outdoor outlets and in attics, crawl spaces, bathrooms, garages and kitchens, and near laundry or utility sinks and around wet bars. GFCI outlets should be tested regularly, and that means as often as once a month. Although they can last 15 to 25 years, some will malfunction in five years or less. While they can continue to carry current, once they lose their ability to mitigate shocks by immediately closing off current, they should be replaced. A licensed electrician can do the job quickly and professionally.

Any of these gift ideas will offer peace of mind for the giver and the receiver, and they'll reduce risks throughout the holidays and improve safety for years to come.

Derrill Holly writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Exploring the Different Types of Electric Cars

Electric cars offer many benefits to both their owners and the environment. Driving an electric car emits 54% fewer carbon dioxide emissions per mile than the average new gasoline car.

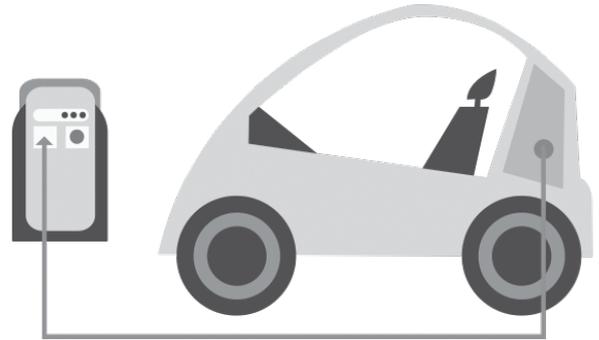
Moreover, the cost of “fueling” an electric vehicle averages \$1.20 per gallon, which is much less than the average cost of a gallon of regular gasoline (\$2.21 in September 2020; see “egallon” calculator at Energy.gov).

The electric car movement is gaining speed. With more than 1.5 million electric cars currently operating in the United States, electric car sales are forecasted to surpass 3.5 million per year by 2030.

Not all electric cars operate the same way. Four main types of electric cars exist on the roads today.

- Hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs) have been on the market the longest. HEVs include a small battery pack that is not charged by plugging in, but rather the batteries in hybrids are charged by the internal combustion engine and/or the braking process. HEVs function as battery-assisted vehicles and are not powered solely by batteries at any given time. Many modern HEVs get an estimated 50 mpg for both city and highway.
- Battery electric vehicles (BEVs) do not rely on any gasoline to power the vehicle and have zero tailpipe emissions. BEV operators simply plug their vehicles into their home electric grid or a public charging station to charge. BEVs also generate electricity from braking, similar to HEVs, and use this as a secondary energy source. Unfortunately, BEVs are somewhat limited in how far they can drive on a single charge. Most BEVs have all-electric ranges of 80 to 100 miles, while a few have ranges up to 250 miles. On longer road trips, these gas-free vehicles rely on the availability of charging stations to continue the trip, which are sometimes difficult to find. Depending on the model, it may take anywhere from 30 minutes to several hours to recharge a vehicle, much longer than the average stop at a gas station.
- Plug-in hybrid EVs run on both battery power and gasoline, and have much smaller battery packs than BEVs. The all-battery range in these vehicles is typically between five and 30 miles, and then the internal combustion engine is responsible for anything beyond that. Plug-in hybrids effectively reduce operator emissions for short trips around town; longer trips are powered by gasoline.

Electric vehicles account for only 1 percent of today’s market, but are predicted to increase to **12%** by 2055.



Safe Electricity.org

Information collected from the Department of Energy’s Energy Information Administration

- Range extender hybrid EVs (REHs) function the same as plug-in hybrids but have higher battery ranges due to design differences. Examples include the BMWi3 and the discontinued Chevrolet Volt. Some REHs drive more than 50 miles on a single charge. In addition to battery power, they also feature a traditional internal combustion engine, with some models making more than 40 miles per gallon once the battery is drained.

It is worth noting that EV battery ranges can vary depending on weather conditions. For example, cars have to work harder to run in colder temperatures and using the defrost or heat is more likely to decrease range. Also, at-home charging times depend on how you charge at home — 120 volts versus 240 volts. These are caveats you will want to consider when shopping for an electric car.

EVs are not for everyone, but the electric car industry does not seem to be slowing down anytime soon. With technology constantly improving, vehicle manufacturers plan to debut electric pickup trucks in 2021 and many cities are moving toward electric public transportation.