

# K.C. ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 2023

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**Our mission** is to provide our members with safe, reliable service at the lowest cost, while maintaining an environmentally responsible, accountable and sustainable operation now and in the future.

## PLAYING IT SAFE ONLINE

BY DAVID CHURCHWELL

GENERAL MANAGER



DAVID CHURCHWELL

In today's world, most of us don't leave the front door unlocked. We protect our homes, loved ones, and valuables from intruders with locks and other security measures. Cybersecurity is no different. It's the practice of protecting valuables such as your identity, banking, health records, and other sensitive information from digital attacks and theft.

In addition to crisper air, fall harvest, and Halloween festivities, October is the time of year we recognize Cybersecurity Awareness Month. While taking necessary steps to protect our personal information is a year-round practice, at K.C. Electric Association, we use this month to share helpful cybersecurity reminders across our team of employees.

Given our increased reliance on internet-connected devices and gadgets, this month I want to share a few cybersecurity tips and let you know how K.C. Electric is working to boost our own cybersecurity efforts.

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (an agency of the United States Department of Homeland Security that is responsible for strengthening cybersecurity and infrastructure protection), these are the four best ways to keep you and your family safe online:

- 1. Implement multi-factor authentication** (also known as two-step verification) on your accounts. The additional layer of protection makes it much harder for criminals to access your information. Even if a hacker obtains your password, they may be unable to access your accounts if multi-factor verification is enabled.

- 2. Update your software.** This is one of the easiest ways to protect your personal data. When downloading a software update, make sure it's coming straight from the company that created it. Beware of fake pop-ups that request urgent downloads. Better yet, consider turning on automatic updates.
- 3. Think before you click.** Most successful cyberattacks start with a phishing email. Don't take the bait when cyber criminals go phishing. Avoid emails (or texts) that look too good to be true, are oddly urgent, are poorly crafted, or include unusual requests.

[continued on page 6]



**CO-OPS  
GROW** 

**COMMUNITIES**

Electric cooperatives are joining co-ops across the U.S. to celebrate National Co-op Month. As your local electric co-op, our services are shaped to meet your specific needs. We love growing with you, the members we are proud to serve.

## Playing it Safe Online

[continued from page 5]

4. **Create strong passwords**, using long, unique, and complex words or phrases. Consider using a password manager. These can save time, work across all devices, protect your identity, and notify you of potential phishing websites.

### FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD

Just as you would talk with your children about safety in the physical world, discuss ways to stay safe online. Help them understand the public nature of the internet. Kids need to know early on that what is shared online stays online and is difficult (if not impossible) to take back. Just as you would guard your money or valuables, children need to learn to guard their personal information, especially on social networks. Teach your children about and use the privacy and security settings on social networks and gaming sites.

### KEEPING THE ELECTRIC GRID AND YOUR DATA SECURE

We're doing our share on the cyber front. Part of offering excellent service is keeping that service secure and reliable. For K.C. Electric, reliability means repairing wear-and-tear, upgrading our equipment to withstand storms and severe weather, and using technology and best practices to keep our system secure from cybersecurity issues.

We work together with co-ops across the state and the country to develop new technologies and infrastructure, learn from each other, and keep the grid's network secure.

While we can't stop a storm or predict every disruption, as a co-op we do everything we can to keep the lights on and our members protected. If we all do our part, our interconnected world will be safer and more secure for everyone.

# DECORATE SAFELY

**Avoid real scares and  
decorate safely.**

**Only use cords and plugs  
that are rated for outdoor use.**



## Claim Your Savings

Each month, members have a chance to claim a \$20 credit on their next electric bill. All you must do is find your account number, call the Hugo office at 719-743-2431, and ask for your credit. The account numbers are listed below. How simple is that?

You must claim your credit during the month in which your name appears in the magazine (check the date on the front cover).

**Matthew Turner, Cheyenne Wells — 1114930004**

**Collene Walsh, Arapahoe — 1100040001**

**Amanda Stansbury, Cheyenne — Wells 40182602**

**C. Jerome Conlin, Burlington — 1103470102**

In August, Brett Legg from Cheyenne Wells called to claim his savings.



To ensure your home's electrical system is safe, all wiring should be up-to-date and any defects corrected.

How do you know if your home needs an electrical inspection?

## DOES YOUR HOME NEED A CHECKUP?

### If your home was last inspected:

- 40 or more years ago, an inspection is overdue.
- 10-40 years ago, an inspection is advised.
- Less than 10 years ago, an inspection should not be necessary unless you are noticing electrical issues.

Regardless of when your home was last checked, new electrical problems can appear at any time. Consult a qualified electrician if you notice symptoms of a potential hazard, which can include: dim or flickering lights; unusual sounds; a frequent need to reset fuses or breakers; overheating; odors; loose plugs; damaged insulation on wires; or conditions that cause electrical shocks.

SOURCE: U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

## K.C. ELECTRIC ACHIEVES 2022 SAFETY MILESTONE

Each year, electric co-op employees from across the state meet for CREA's Safety and Loss Control Seminar to learn about emerging safety issues and share best practices. This year, the 30th annual event took place in Colorado Springs.

During the meeting, K.C. Electric Association was among 12 co-ops that were recognized for having no lost-time injuries in 2022. K.C. Electric takes pride in its safety record and is pleased to have another year of providing safe and reliable power to the members of the co-op.

CREA's Curt Graham (second from right) presents a 2022 No Lost Time Accident Award to K.C. Electric employees (left to right) Louden Hornung, Jason Brandon, and Darren Fox.



## ONLY CERTIFIED WORKERS CAN TRIM TREES NEAR POWER LINES

Can anyone trim trees near power lines? The answer is no. Specialized tree trimmers, certified by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in utility clearance, are the only persons legally allowed to trim within 10 feet of power lines.

OSHA requires this certification because electricity is a serious and widespread hazard to tree workers. According to the Tree Care Industry Association, electricity is the leading cause of death among tree care workers, causing about 15% of all industry fatalities. Tree care industry workers do not have to directly contact a power line to be electrocuted; about half of all electrocution fatalities are the result of indirect contact.

Qualified line-clearance tree trimmers must be specially trained in how to work safely in proximity to energized lines. They must understand how an electrical grid functions; the effects of tree growth patterns and tree damage; and how to implement directional pruning as required by the American National Standard for Arboricultural Operations' safety standards.

According to OSHA, the duties of

line-clearance certified tree trimmers typically include the following:

- Undergoing annual evaluations by licensed professionals to ensure continuous adherence to industry best practices.
- Requesting job briefings from employers and other crew members before starting a job or when environmental conditions change.
- Wearing approved personal protective equipment, including fall protection equipment when needed.
- Complying with material handling and mechanical equipment requirements.
- Working with a second line-clearance tree trimmer within voice range.
- Determining the voltages of lines before work begins or assuming that the line is operating at the highest possible voltage if it is not possible to determine voltage.
- Ensuring body parts, ladders, platforms, or aerial devices being used remain outside the minimum approach distance from any energized equipment.
- Using only insulated tools and equipment to remove branches and tree limbs that

are in contact with or are within the minimum approach distance of energized lines or equipment.

- Determining when weather conditions make work longer safe, such as the presence of high winds, ice, or lightning.
- Beginning work on storm restoration efforts in the aftermath of a storm if they have been trained in the special hazards involved with this type of work.

Please contact K.C. Electric Association if you have questions about line-clearance tree trimmers or tree trimming near power lines.

### Safety Tip

Do not trim trees/branches within 10 feet of a power line or pole. Only certified line clearance tree trimmers are authorized to trim near power lines.

