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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 278, WaKeeney, KS 67672  
800-456-6720

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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC

# NEWS

Western Cooperative  
Electric, Inc.

Darrin Lynch—General Manager

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### Tip of the Month

Avoid placing lamps or TV's near your air-conditioning thermostat. The thermostat senses heat from these appliances, which can cause the air conditioner to run longer than necessary.

## Join us for Western's Annual Meeting Wednesday, May 11, 2016

at Western Cooperative Electric office  
635 S. 13th St., WaKeeney  
Registration will begin at 11 a.m.  
Lunch served at noon.  
Meeting at 1 p.m.

### New this year:

- ▶ Voting for Trustees will take place by mail-in ballot. Look for your ballot in the mail.
- ▶ For your convenience, a webcast of the Annual Meeting will air at our outpost locations where light refreshments will be served.

*We hope to see you there!*

May 2016						
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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15	15	17	18	19	20	21
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29	30	31				

## Coming Soon! New Online Bill Pay Website

We are excited to announce the upcoming launch of Western's new online bill payment website, Ebiz. To make a payment online, register on Ebiz on or after the website goes live (launch date to be determined). Ebiz will be available at no extra cost to you, the member—no more convenience fees for using credit/debit cards (a savings of \$3.95 per transaction)!

### Highlights of the new site:

- ▶ Provides safe, secure online transactions
- ▶ Saves credit/debit card information, if desired
- ▶ Specifies date to have payment applied
- ▶ Accepts eCheck, bank drafts and recurring card payments
- ▶ Tracks energy usage and displays current bill in one place for all of your accounts!

Shortly after the rollout of Ebiz, an affiliated mobile app will be available to make payments and check usage.

### The following will be available with the upcoming mobile app:

- ▶ Email and text notifications
- ▶ Outage reporting
- ▶ Prepaid billing support (balance payments and notifications)
- ▶ Graphical energy usage information with weather data

Look for more details in Western's centerspread in following issues of *Kansas Country Living*.

If you have any questions, please call 1-800-456-6720.

## Know Your Home Electrical System

May is National Electrical Safety Month and Western Cooperative Electric encourages you to take an active role in identifying hazards and safeguarding your family from the dangers these hazards pose.

Electricity plays an important role in our everyday lives. Whether operating a computer, watching TV, powering a heating and cooling system, or charging a cell phone, we rely on our electrical system for completing daily tasks.

By understanding the basics of how electricity is distributed around your home, you can help manage the demands placed on your electrical system and keep it in safe working condition.

The electric meter, mounted outside, is where electricity enters your home. It's used to measure the amount of electricity your home uses.

The service panel is the central distribution point for delivering electricity to switches and outlets throughout the house. Breakers shut off power to specific circuits or the entire system.

Service panels are equipped with either fuses (older systems) or circuit breakers (modern systems) that protect the wires in each circuit from overheating and causing a fire.

Each circuit breaker contains a permanent metal strip that heats up and bends when electricity moves through it.

A typical service panel consists of two 120 volt rated conductors and one neutral conductor that delivers power to a variety of appliances and equipment.

The 120 volt

circuits use one phase of the electrical service to power standard home appliances. However, certain larger appliances, such as water heaters, electric ranges, clothes dryers, and water pumps, can require up to a 240-volt circuit. If a circuit is overloaded, the strip bends enough to flip the switch and shut off power! Electric meters are used to measure the amount of electricity being used. You can find your electric meter mounted outdoors near your home or business.

When a fault or overload shuts down power to a circuit, the service panel is usually where the power flow can be restored. The service panel is also where the power can be shut down before completing a project or making repairs.

Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs) are protective devices that replace standard circuit breakers in the service panel. AFCIs provide enhanced protection against fire hazards known as arc faults—caused by damaged, overheated, or stressed electrical wiring or devices.

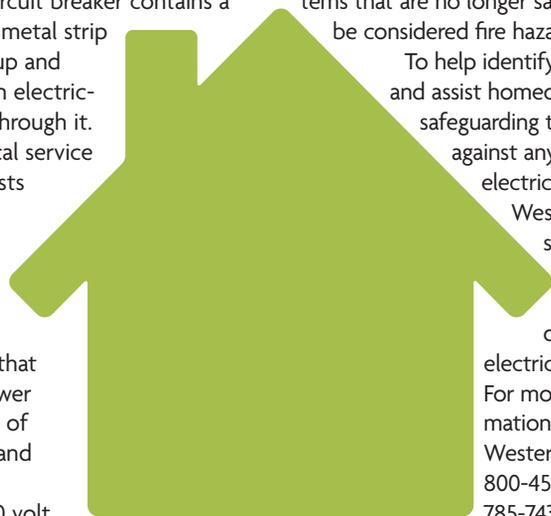
Other items to be considered for a safety check are electrical outlets and extension cords.

About one-third of homes in the U.S. are at least 50 years old, many of which were built with electrical systems that are no longer safe and may be considered fire hazards.

To help identify hazards and assist homeowners in safeguarding themselves against any of these

electrical hazards, Western offers safety demonstrations to address those

electrical needs. For more information contact Western's office at 800-456-6720 or 785-743-5561.



# The Dangers of Electric Shock Drowning

Despite being categorized as leisure activities, swimming and boating can quickly become dangerous. While water-safety behaviors such as wearing life jackets and maintaining safe boating speeds have become commonplace, a serious hazard remains that is often overlooked. This silent killer, classified as electric shock drowning, occurs in fresh water when a typically low level alternating current (AC) passes through the body, which causes muscular paralysis and eventually leads to drowning.

Electrical Safety Foundation International president Brett Brenner said, "although there are reported incidents every year, there is a lack of awareness about the dangers of electric shock drowning." A 21-year-old Illinois man died in 2015 when touching a dock ladder at the Lake of the Ozarks in Missouri. Additionally, there were at least two fatalities in Kentucky in 2013, and a pair of deaths in both Missouri and Tennessee during the Fourth of July holiday in 2012. Further, electric shock drowning deaths are usually recorded as drowning because victims show no signs of burns, so many instances remain undocumented.

While a lack of awareness persists about the dangers of electric shock drowning, positive strides are being taken to combat the problem. In Tennessee, state legislators passed the Noah Dean and Nate Act in 2014, which protects state residents from electric shock injuries and drowning deaths near marinas and boat docks. The bill is named in memory of 10-year-old Noah Dean Winstead and 11-year-old Nate Lynam, who died from electrical injuries they suffered on July 4, 2012, at a marina in Tennessee. Jessica Winstead, Noah Dean's mother, was the driving force behind the bill as a result of her tireless crusade to prevent similar tragedies from occurring. An inspection following the tragic incident found that the marina did not

have ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).

Under the "Noah Dean and Nate Act," Tennessee marinas must install ground fault protection, post notices about the danger of electrical leakage into waters surrounding a marina, and undergo a safety inspection conducted by the state fire marshal between Jan. 1, 2015, and Dec. 31, 2017, and every five years thereafter. The law went into effect April 1, 2015. A similar law was passed in West Virginia in 2013 following the death of Michael Cunningham, three years after he passed away at the age of 15, as well as in Arkansas in 2012 after several electrocutions near docks there and in surrounding states.

The 2011 National Electrical Code addresses the dangers in marinas and boat yards by requiring the main overcurrent protective device to be GFCI-protected. However, this only applies to installations and inspections, which are recommended annually but not enforced.

Protect yourself and your loved ones from the risk of electric shock drowning and common boat electrical hazards with these tips from Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI).

- ▶ Don't swim near docks. Avoid entering the water when launching or loading your boat.
- ▶ Always maintain a distance of at least 10 feet between your boat and nearby power lines.
- ▶ If you feel a tingle while swimming, the water may be electrified. Get out as soon as possible avoiding the use of metal objects such as ladders.
- ▶ Have your boat's electrical system inspected and upgraded by a certified marine electrician who is familiar with National Fire

Protection Association Codes: NFPA 303 and NFPA 70.

- ▶ Have GFCIs installed on your boat and test them once a month.
- ▶ Consider having Equipment Leakage Circuit Interrupters (ELCI) installed on boats to protect nearby swimmers from potential electricity leakage into water surrounding your boat.
- ▶ Only use shore or marine power cords, plugs, receptacles and extension cords that have been tested by Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or Intertek (ETL).
- ▶ Never use cords that are frayed or damaged or that have had the prongs removed or altered.
- ▶ Never stand or swim in water when turning off electrical devices or switches.
- ▶ Electric shock drowning can also occur in swimming pools, hot tubs, and spas. Have an electrician inspect and upgrade your pool, spa, or hot tub in accordance with applicable local codes and the National Electrical Code (NEC).

For ESFI's complete collection of boating and marina safety resources, visit [www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org).



Get to Know Your  
Western Co-op Electric Staff

## Ron Aschenbrenner

Assistant Line Superintendent



Ron Aschenbrenner

### TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

I've been married to my wife, Shawna, for 17 years, and we have three children: Kelby, 15, Gracie, 11, and Jared, 5. We also

have a dog, Rocky.

### HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT WESTERN?

15 years

### WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

WaKeeney

### WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Spending time with my family, camping, fishing, and going to car shows.

### WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

Acquiring the job I have today.

### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?

Seattle, Washington

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE OR BOOK AND WHY?

Movies starring Kevin James and Chris Farley. I enjoy funny movies.

### WHAT IS SOMETHING PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I played the piano in my younger years.

### WHAT SPORT OR TEAM IS YOUR FAVORITE?

Kansas City Royals

### WHO HAS INSPIRED YOU IN YOUR LIFE AND WHY?

My dad. He taught me a good work ethic and to be dedicated to your job.

## Safety during a Thunderstorm

Western Cooperative Electric urges everyone to be aware of the dangers associated with lightning and how to protect themselves.

If thunderstorms and lightning are approaching, the safest location is inside away from doors and windows with the shades drawn. You do not have to see clouds to be within striking distance. Lightning can strike up to 10 miles from the area in which it is raining. It is also important to remember that voltage can enter your home even if lightning does not directly strike your home. Voltage can enter your home through phone lines, electrical wires, cables, and plumbing.

Follow the recommendations below to avoid lightning shock:

- ▶ Turn off and unplug appliances well before a storm nears—never during. Do not expect a surge protector to save appliances from a lightning strike. Unplug them as well.
- ▶ Use only cordless or cell phones to make emergency calls.
- ▶ Stay away from electrical outlets, appliances, computers, power tools, TVs, and other objects that could conduct electricity. Take off headsets and stop playing video games.
- ▶ Turn off your air conditioner to protect the compressor from a power surge and avoid a costly repair job.
- ▶ Avoid water and contact with piping—including sinks, baths, and faucets. Do not 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.
- ▶ Don't lie on a concrete floor of a ga-

rage 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.
- ▶ Don't forget your pets. Dog houses are not lightning-safe, and dogs chained to trees can easily fall victim to a strike.
- ▶ When the storm is over, wait 30 minutes after the last lightning strike you see before going outside.

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

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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, and mowers.
- ▶ Avoid water, high ground, and open spaces.
- ▶ Don't stand near power, light, or flag poles; machinery; fences; gates; metal bleachers; and even other people. If you are in a group, spread out so that you are at least 20 feet apart.
- ▶ If your skin tingles or your hair stands on end, lightning may be about to strike. Squat down low to the ground with your head between your knees making yourself the smallest target possible.

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.

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