

## TWIN VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# NEWS



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#### Office Hours

##### Monday-Friday

8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

#### Contact Us

501 S. Huston Ave., P.O. Box 368

Altamont, KS 67330

620-784-5500

[www.twinvalleyelectric.coop](http://www.twinvalleyelectric.coop)

### FROM THE MANAGER

## The Cooperative Difference

By reading this column, you're helping Twin Valley Electric Cooperative fulfill the fifth coopera-

tive principle, "education, training, and information," one of seven guidelines that govern cooperative operations.

In fact, right now you're holding one of your co-op's primary conduits of education and information, *Kansas Country Living*. Through these pages we communicate directly with you, our consumer-members, on important co-op business like bylaws changes and director elections. We also share energy-saving tips to save you money and safety information that could save your life.

We don't stop there. We support student education through our Lineman School scholarship program. Since 2004, we've been sending rising high school seniors-to-be to Washington, D.C., for a week every summer as part of the nationally organized Rural Electric Youth Tour. Youth Tour students receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital to visit historic sites, see important governmental buildings, meet lawmakers, and learn how our system of government works.

We also send a youth to the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp



held in Steamboat Springs, CO, each summer.

Our education efforts extend to our

employees as well. We encourage and support them in taking courses to improve on-the-job skills through our state organization, Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC), or the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the Arlington, VA-based national service organization representing more than 900 consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives, public power districts, and public utility districts in the United States.

We believe well-trained employees are more valuable to the co-op and can provide you, our members, with the high quality of service you've come to expect.

We also sponsor safety seminars for our linemen, field workers, and office personnel. This education is vital to keeping our workforce safe and reduces costs involved with lost-time accidents.

Keeping you informed—so you can vote for directors, learn to manage your energy usage, or understand how your co-op employees are working to better serve you—is one of our most important responsibilities. That's the cooperative difference.



Ron Holsteen

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## NOTES FROM OPERATIONS

## Addressing Your Questions



William Worthy

I would like to take the space allotted to me this month to answer a few questions that are posed to Twin Valley employees as we go through our daily duties.

I hope this will answer some things, but I welcome phone calls on any issue that concerns our members. We would like to be able to assist every member in every situation, but due to insurance and liability issues coupled with the tremendous variation in different brands of equipment, this is not possible.

“Please, help us help you in keeping costs down and the lights on.”

### Security Lights

As we make repairs to security lights, we have been getting questions concerning the color emitted by the new lights.

Mercury Vapor Lights (MVL) are being phased out and being replaced by High Pressure Sodium (HPS) lights. The MVL bulbs are still available for a while longer, but the fixtures themselves are not being produced. If we come out to repair your light, and it is just the bulb, we should be able to repair it. However, if the fixture itself is bad, it will be replaced with an HPS light.

Yes, the orange glow is a bit different, but not only are the HPS lights safer, they are 40 percent more efficient than the MVL. Twin Valley will provide and install a new HPS light at no cost to the member. The removed fixture and all packaging for the new light will be placed neatly at the bottom of the pole for you to dispose.

### Trees

As written in an earlier article, Twin Valley has nothing against nature and the beautiful, majestic trees that are produced for all to enjoy. However, trees are very hard on your electric system and have to be dealt with on a regular basis.

Contrary to popular belief, Twin Valley Electric Cooperative does not own any trees. When we come to your property to trim your tree out of the electric service, the limbs will be left at the location. In most cases we should be able to cut and stack in a way that you can handle, but in a storm or emergency situation, this might not be the case.

We will continue to work on this and hope you understand our position.

### Member's Service

Anything past the main breaker (the breaker immediately below the meter) is the member's responsibility.

Twin Valley's responsibility is to deliver 120/240v at 60 MHz to your breaker box for you to consume. Our guidelines are set by codes that allow this voltage to fluctuate by five percent either side of the 120/240v mark. During the day, as load increases or decreases, a change in the voltage will occur. Never should the voltage change or fluctuate to where you notice a change in your service quality.

If you notice flickers or lights dimming and/or getting brighter, this needs to be looked into. Keep in mind that the problem could be on your side and you are responsible for that repair. If the problem is on our side, Twin Valley will repair it at no cost to you. If the problem is on your side, Twin Valley can fix these issues (as long as they are outside of the residence, barn, or building) and you will be charged for the repairs. Twin Valley service personnel are under orders not to enter a residence for repairs.

Any overhead service to barns or outbuildings that are past the meter is your responsibility as well, this includes trees. We can trim them and bill you for the time and equipment. It is your responsibility to dispose of the limbs.

### Contacting Twin Valley

All calls should be placed to our main number 620-784-5500, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Calls placed to one of our secondary lines might lead to you not receiving the attention you need from Twin Valley. Calls for outages can be made anytime to the above number.

If you have service issues other than an outage, please call between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday and speak with one of our customer service representatives about the issue.

As General Manager Holsteen reported a couple of months ago, our after-hours dispatching is handled off-site. We will get the information, but it may not be handled as quickly and efficiently as we strive for.

Please, help us help you, in keeping costs down and the lights on.

# Is Your Home Safe from Electrical Fires?

Tips for National Fire Prevention Week Oct. 3-10

Have you done everything you can to protect your home from electrical fires? According to the United States Fire Administration, each year home electrical fires claim nearly 500 lives, injure more than 2,000 and cause nearly a billion dollars in property losses.

The tragedy is that the vast majority of these fires are preventable. Twin Valley Electric urges everyone to take steps to avoid highly-preventable home fire tragedies.

- ▶ Electrical extension cords are intended for temporary use, not permanent wiring. Use them only as needed and don't overload them.
- ▶ Take note if electrical appliances show signs of damage or heavy wear, and check cords and plugs for cracked or broken insulation, or ground pins removed from three-prong plugs. Replace worn, old or damaged appliances and cords.
- ▶ Switch plates and outlet covers that are discolored or warm to the touch indicate a problem and should be checked out. Immediately shut off light switches that are hot to the touch and have them professionally replaced. Have an electrician check the wiring in your house if you are experiencing any of these things.
- ▶ Do not place cords and wires under rugs, or in high traffic areas.
- ▶ Do not trap electric cords against



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- walls where heat can build up.
- ▶ Don't allow children to play with or around electrical appliances like space heaters, irons and hair dryers.
- ▶ Unplug appliances when not in use.
- ▶ If an appliance has a three-prong plug, use it only in a three-slot outlet. Never force it to fit into a two-slot outlet or extension cord.
- ▶ When buying electrical appliances look for products evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). When using appliances, follow the manufacturer's safety precautions.

Finally, having a working smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. And remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family.

# Stay Safe this Halloween

More and more people decorate their yards for Halloween with elaborate lighting displays with as much enthusiasm and materials as they do for the Christmas holidays!

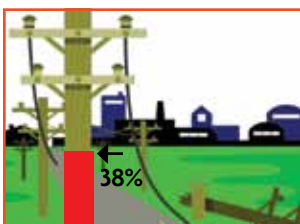
Strings of decorative lights, fog machines, strobe and black lights, animatronics, electrically powered decorations and more all add to the ambience of your haunt, but improperly used, can create added dangers of fire, shock and other potentially disastrous accidents.

Twin Valley urges everyone to use caution and look for potential hazards while decorating and operating these displays. Twin Valley offers these tips:

- ▶ Carefully inspect each electrical decoration. Cracked or frayed sockets, loose or bare wires, and loose connections may cause a serious shock or start a fire.
- ▶ Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage.
- ▶ Don't overload extension cords or allow them to run through water or snow on the ground.
- ▶ Before using any light strings, animated displays or other electrical products outdoors, make sure the product is approved by a nationally recognized certification organization such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL) and marked "for outdoor use."
- ▶ Follow the use and care instructions that accompany your electrical decorations. Most light sets and props will include how many can be safely strung together. Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single outlet.



Encourage children to use caution while trick-or-treating.



## FEMA Rebuild Update

As of September 17, we have completed 38% of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) rebuild work.

# Energy Efficiency: Act Now to Save Money

To enjoy a warm, safe home this winter, use pleasant weather to cold-proof doors and windows.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, 31 percent of the average energy bill goes to warming a home in the winter. That is the biggest slice of your utility bill, and there are some things you can do to keep some of that in your pocket.

A good first step is conducting an energy audit. This will assess how much energy your home uses so you can evaluate what you can do to improve efficiency. ENERGYSTAR.gov has a do-it-yourself audit.

A furnace obstructed by dirty air filters will use more energy to put less warm air into your home, so mark your calendar to clean or replace your furnace air filters monthly. Since warm air rises, reverse your ceiling fans to pull warm air from the top of a room and circulate it where its comfort can be enjoyed. A third significant step to a more comfortable home is use the summer and fall to caulk your windows and install weather stripping around doors. Sealing your home from drafts and reducing air infiltration can increase your energy efficiency by 45 percent.

Once you have a good start on improving your winter comfort level, consider adjustments to the thermostats on your furnace and water heater. Most conventional water heaters are set to 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Lowering the temperature by 20 degrees would reduce your water heating costs by six to 10 percent. And watch the thermostat on your furnace. For every degree you lower the thermostat during heating season, you'll save between one and three percent of your heating bill.

Also mark your checklist to:

- ▶ Check to see if your hot water pipes are warm to the touch. If so, they are good candidates for insulation. You can get pre-slit pipe foam at most hardware stores. Cut it to size and fasten in place with duct tape.
- ▶ Humidify the normally dry inside

your house. Dry air typically requires a higher temperature for people to be comfortable than a humid environment. You can help combat dry air with water vapors from bathing and cooking because they help humidify the home. Use exhaust fans sparingly in the winter to keep as much heat as possible inside your house.

- ▶ Saving money is great, but nothing is more important than your family's safety, particularly if you have a gas or oil furnace or other open flame heating device. The Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) reports that approximately 200 people per year are killed by accidental carbon monoxide poisoning. Known as the "silent killer", carbon monoxide is a tasteless, odorless, colorless toxic gas that is a by-product of combustion.

Here are some steps to make your home safe this winter:

- ▶ Make sure your fuel-burning appliances - oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas ranges and ovens, gas dryers, gas or kerosene space heaters, fireplaces and wood stoves—are installed and working according to manufacturers' instructions.
- ▶ Have all of your fuel-burning appliances inspected and cleaned by a professional at the beginning of every heating season, and never use ovens and gas ranges to heat your

home.

- ▶ Make sure your furnace has an adequate intake of outside air, and ensure that flues and chimneys are connected, unclogged and in good working condition. Also, choose appliances that vent fumes to the outside whenever possible.
- ▶ Use the proper fuel and keep doors to the rest of the house open when using gas or kerosene space heaters. Crack a window to ensure enough air for ventilation and proper burning of fuel. Never sleep in an enclosed space with gas or kerosene space heaters.

Carbon monoxide detectors can be used to help alert you of the presence of CO, but should not be used as a replacement for proper use and maintenance of your fuel-burning appliances. Do your research before making a CO detector purchase. Never buy one that is not UL (Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.) approved and does not have a long-term warranty, and don't select one based solely on price. Make sure you have enough detectors to cover your entire house, and that they are placed as close to sleeping areas as possible. Also make sure that the manufacturers' instructions for placement, use and maintenance are followed closely.

Taking these steps can help ensure you have a safe, warm winter and save some money too.

**I THOUGHT I WAS TIGHT WITH MY MONEY. NOW I'M AIRTIGHT.**

All it took was a tube of caulk and half an afternoon. Now, I'm saving \$212 a year by sealing a few cracks around the house. What can you do? Find out how the little changes add up at [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com).



  
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