



Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative

## SEDGWICK COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# currentnews

### Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative

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### FROM THE MANAGER

## BE SMART Around Electricity: Inside your home

Many safety hazards are obvious and can be seen, smelled or heard: that wrinkled rug you could trip on, spoiled food that could make you sick, icy pavement that could cause a nasty fall, or a weather siren announcing an approaching tornado.

Electrical hazards, however, are often undetectable. While some you can see, smell or feel — outlets that are warm to the touch or lights that constantly flicker, for example — many others you cannot.

Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative and Safe Electricity remind you of these electrical safety tips to keep in mind in and around your home:

- ▶ Cell phones make strange bedfellows: Do not sleep or lounge in bed with a cell phone or other device that is charging. Doing so can cause burns to your skin or it can cause the soft bedding materials to ignite. This also goes for devices that are warm to the touch but not plugged in.

- ▶ Do not use cheap chargers:

Use the original charging components that came with your cell phone or other electronics. When it comes time to replace them, spend a little extra to buy brand-specific chargers and cubes. Using cheaply made generic chargers with your electronics can cause injury (shock or burns) or even a fire if they are defective.

- ▶ Charging devices and water don't mix: Do not use a plugged in (charging) cell phone near water. Take a break from your phone while bathing. Deaths have occurred when a plugged-in cell phone has fallen into the bathtub. DO NOT use plugged in items near water.
- ▶ Do not overload outlets or circuits. It's tempting to plug in several items in one



Scott Ayres

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## Help us Locate the Following Co-op Members

The names listed below have capital credit refunds due to them, but we are unable to locate these former members. If you have information that would help us contact any individual or business listed below, please call the office at 316-542-3131 or 866-542-4732.

Biddle, Tonya  
Boone, Chris  
Boswell, Marty  
Brenden, Penny  
C-S Industries  
Castle Realty & Investment  
Crabil, Virgil R  
Dejmal, Lee  
Dickerson, R L  
Doshier, Dayrl & Tammy  
Edgmon, Jack D  
First Preston Management  
Harrelson, Glen M & Mary G  
Haskins, Terry & Nancy  
Henderson, Gene D  
Hill, Angel L  
Kepple, Donald & Patricia  
Mc Cune, Crystal  
Rocha-Velo, Maria  
Scott, Marion  
Simons, Priscilla  
Titan Construction Llc  
Wellborn, Patricia A  
Weninger, Shellie J

## Gechter Promoted

**CHANDLER GECHTER** has been promoted to 2nd year apprentice lineman effective May 13, 2020. Prior to being an apprentice, he was an equipment operator/groundman. Gechter has been with the cooperative since December 2016.



Chandler Gechter

## BE SMART Around Electricity: Inside your home

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- outlet or on one circuit, but drawing too much power can damage your electronics or your home's wiring, or cause more serious problems such as a fire. If too much current is drawn, usually a circuit breaker will trip or fuses will blow, but this is never guaranteed.
- ▶ Do not use portable heaters unattended or around small children or pets. Do not place flammable items near on a space heater.
  - ▶ Ditch that old electric blanket: Do not use an electric blanket that is 10 years old or older or one that has frayed or visible wires in the blanket itself. Do not use one that has a damaged electrical cord or plug.
  - ▶ Test your GFCI buttons once a month: Put a reminder in your phone or mark it on your calendar each month. GFCIs help prevent ground faults that can shock or injure you, but they can't do their job if they are not working properly.
  - ▶ Do not ignore odd electrical symptoms in your home. If your lights flicker often, if your outlets are warm to the touch, or if you smell odors like something is overheating but can't determine where the odors are coming from, there may be problems with your home's electrical system. There might also be a problem if your circuits or fuses are tripped or need to be changed often. If you notice any of these symptoms or other unusual electrical oddities in your home, have a qualified electrician assess your home's electrical system.
  - ▶ Is your home AFCI protected? AFCI stands for arc fault circuit interrupter, and when there is an arc fault, it means that an electrical source in your home is malfunctioning. When that happens, an arc (intense heat or light) can be discharged. Because of that, AFCIs are required by National Electric Code since they help prevent home fires. Have a professional electrician assess your home to make sure AFCIs are installed, especially if your home is older. He or she can also inspect your older home's wiring to make sure it can handle today's electrical demands.
  - ▶ Babyproof and childproof your home, including electrical sources. There are many everyday electrical dangers that toddlers and children can tamper with, such as exposed outlets, accessible power strips and surge protectors, and hanging or dangling cords. In addition, little ones like to imitate you, and there have been reports of toddlers trying to plug the wrong end of a phone charger into the outlet, which can cause severe shocks or burns. Be aware of potential electrical dangers throughout the home. Get down on the floor and see what's at eye level or within reach.
  - ▶ Tamper-resistant outlets became part of the National Electric Code in 2008, but many homes built before that year do not have them. Make sure all of your outlets are covered (with a plastic plug, for example) so that small children cannot insert foreign objects into the slots.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Spending more time at home? Try an online energy audit to assess the overall efficiency of your home. Visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov), then enter "home energy yardstick" in the search box to get started. **Source: energystar.gov**

## Alphabet Soup: What are GFCIs and AFCIs?

We have probably all heard the terms GFCI and AFCI when it comes to electrical safety, but what do the letters stand for? And how do these letter-heavy, acronym-named devices help keep us safe?

### GFCIs

GFCIs, or ground fault circuit interrupters, help protect against electrical shock and electrocution. It is important to test and reset the red outlet (GFCI) buttons monthly to ensure they are working properly. GFCIs are typically installed in outlets or circuits close to water sources in and outside of the home.

When they are in working order, GFCIs help prevent shock by detecting current variations along the electrical path. If a person's body starts to receive a shock because of current variations, the GFCI senses this and cuts off the power.

According to the National Electrical Code, a "ground fault" is a conducting connection (whether intentional or accidental) between any electric conductor and any conducting material that is grounded or that may become grounded.

In other words, a ground fault happens when an electrical circuit malfunctions, causing the electrical current to seek a path to ground other than through the intended wires. A human or animal in the wrong place at the wrong time could become that "path to ground" or conduit of electricity.

### AFCIs

AFCIs, or arc fault circuit interrupters, are required by the National Electrical Code for some, but not all, electrical circuits in the home. The device breaks the circuit when it determines a dangerous electrical arc, which is a discharge between two electrodes that can cause intense heat or light. The extreme heat of an arc can cause a fire, so that is why AFCIs are required by code.

Most people associate arcs with welding, but they can happen in the home or when the conductors on a power line are interrupted, such as when a tree falls on it or a car strikes a utility pole and the line falls.

Much like a GFCI is to a ground fault, the AFCI breaks the circuit when it detects an arc or abnormalities in the flow of electricity. That safeguard or break in circuit helps prevent a fire or other arc-related electrical damage. The temperatures of an arc can exceed 10,000 degrees.

An AFCI can distinguish between insignificant, harmless arcs and the undesirable kind that could start a fire or cause damage. Benign or uneventful arcs can be an everyday byproduct of using switches and plugs in good working order.

### What are arcs and ground faults, again?

So, in review, an arc fault is the unintended result of current flowing through an unplanned path. A significant arc can cause burning particles that can easily ignite the materials around it, drywall, insulation or wood.

And a ground fault? A ground fault happens when stray electricity takes an unintentional pathway and the current flows directly to the earth, into the ground. If you become part of that path, the result could be shock or electrocution.

## We're Here to Help You Save

Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative is here for you, and given the challenging times we've all experienced the last few months, I'd like to share some information and ideas to help you save energy and money.

Summer is a great time to conduct an energy audit of your home and identify ways to boost energy efficiency. Understanding how your home uses energy can help you determine the best ways to modify energy use and keep more money in your wallet.

An energy audit is one of the best ways to determine how energy efficient your home is — an audit can also identify areas for potential energy savings. We have several qualified energy auditors in our local area. Be sure to hire a professional who will conduct a thorough audit of your home. If you'd prefer to do an energy audit yourself, try ENERGY STAR®'s online audit. Visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov), then enter "home energy yardstick" in the search box to get started. But keep in mind, an online audit won't be as thorough as an in-home audit.

### Shifting to off-peak periods

Electric rates based on time of use offer co-op members the ability to lower their electricity costs without reducing the amount of electricity used. By performing some of your daily chores such as running the dishwasher or doing laundry during off-peak hours (when people are using less electricity), you can see meaningful savings on your energy bills. Use your programmable thermostat to adjust the settings so that your heating and air conditioning systems sync with the off-peak rate periods. Use automatic timers to run hot tubs, pool pumps, water heaters and other appliances in the same way. Be sure to program the timers to coincide with the less expensive off-peak times.

Lastly, if you have recently purchased a new ENERGY STAR®-rated appliance or product, make sure you are taking advantage of any special offers or rebates that are available.

As your trusted energy adviser, we're here to help. If you have questions about your bill or additional ways to save energy, please let us know. We're only one click or phone call away.

## A Well-Designed Landscape Can Save You Some Green

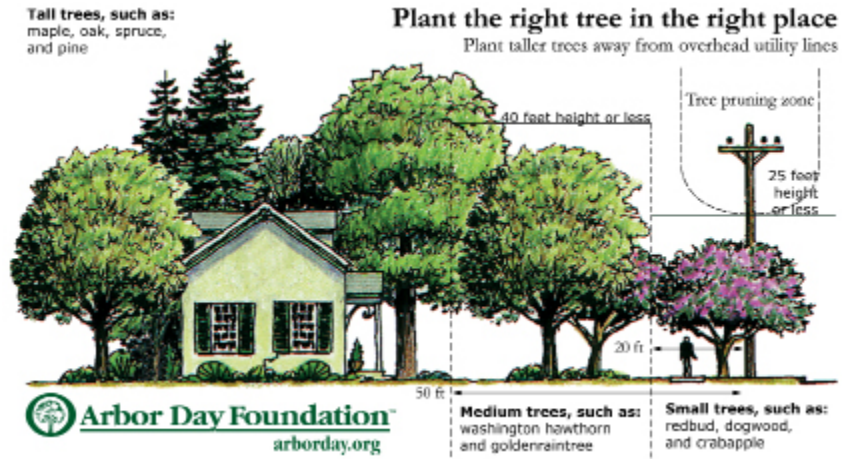
Thinking of planting trees in your yard this summer?

If the answer is yes, giving some thought about where to put them could help reduce your energy bill. Not only are trees beautiful, but shading is the most cost-effective way to reduce heat gain from the sun — a good thing in the summer.

And the savings are nothing to sneeze at. According to the Department of Energy, a well-planned landscape can reduce an unshaded home's air conditioning costs by 15-50%. Our nation's energy authority also boasts that on average, a well-designed landscape saves enough energy to pay for itself in less than eight years.

Although effective, shade-producing landscaping strategies vary by climate, here are some general planting guidelines from the Arbor Day Foundation:

- ▶ Plant on the west and northwest side of your home to provide mid- to late-afternoon shade.



- ▶ Plant shade trees over patios, driveways and air-conditioning units (but never crowd or block your A/C unit; it should have a 5-foot clearance above it and 3 feet on all sides).
- ▶ Use trees to shade east and west windows. If they block your view, prune lower branches.
- ▶ In general, large, deciduous trees planted on the east, west, and northwest sides of your home create shade in the summer and can help decrease the cost of running your air conditioner in the heat of the summer.

### And what is deciduous, you ask?

Deciduous trees shed their leaves annually. Although it equates to a lot of leaves to rake come October, the annual cycle lets the sunshine through in the winter but blocks the sun's rays in the summer. Either scenario helps reduce energy costs if trees are strategically placed in relation to your home.

Trees that don't shed leaves are called evergreens, which usually block the sun year-round. That's great in the summer but not so hot in the winter.

Consult a landscape professional for specific climate/region recommendations.

NOTE: When planting trees, be sure to consider height potential. Do not plant a tree that will mature to more than 15 feet tall near or under power lines. Taller-growing trees (taller than 15 feet at maturity) should be planted a minimum of 20 feet away from power lines, or much farther to avoid future pruning/power line issues.

For more information about planting the right tree in the right place or about electrical safety, go to SafeElectricity.org.

