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Electrical Safety Month

In May, electric cooperatives across the country promote safety awareness to coincide with National Electrical Safety Month.

Thousands of accidents occur due to shock hazards. Every year, Benton REA, a not-for-profit electric utility, is committed to educating the public about potential electrical dangers.

Many home fires occur when electrical equipment is outdated or improperly used.

“It is critical that the public understand their home’s electrical system and the safety concerns associated with the latest residential technologies before bringing them into their homes,” explains Benton REA General Manager Michael Bradshaw. “With newer technologies, such as solar panels, electric

vehicles and more electrical gadgets in the home, people need to be well-educated and make sure to have an electrical system that’s compatible with the increased load.”

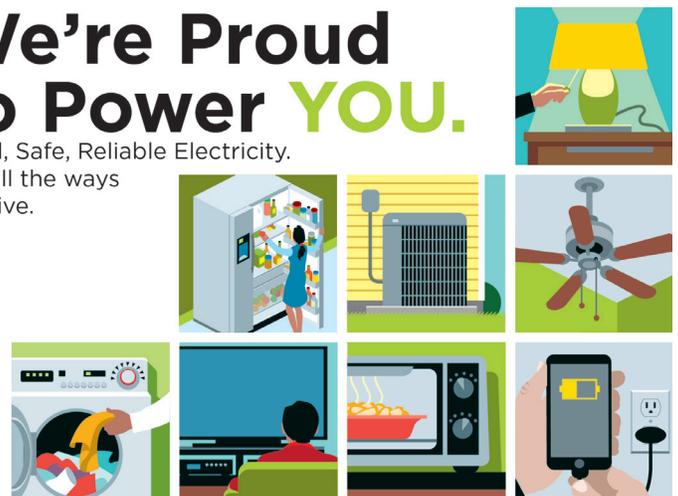
To raise awareness of the importance of electrical safety, we’ve included stories and tips

in this newsletter, your May Ruralite magazine and on our website at BentonREA.org/ safety.

Through electrical safety awareness and education, we can all play a part in preventing electrical hazards and injuries in the future. ■

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BentonREA.org/PowerNET 509-786-4004

*Our offices will be closed
Monday, May 27,
as we celebrate
Memorial Day*



IS YOUR POWER OUT?

If your electricity is out for more than a few minutes:

- Check your breaker box to see if a circuit breaker has tripped.
- Check to see if your neighbors have power.
- Report Benton REA outages by calling 800-221-6987 or use the SmartHub app.

COOPERATIVE INFORMATION

BENTON RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

Prosser Office
402 7th St. | P.O. Box 1150
Prosser, WA 99350
509-786-2913

Office Hours: Mon. - Fri., 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.

West Richland Office
6095 West Van Giesen St.
West Richland, WA 99353
509-967-2921

Office Hours: Mon. - Fri., 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Toll Free: 800-221-6987

www.BentonREA.org

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MEMBER SERVICES

This newsletter is produced by the Benton REA Member Services and Economic Development Department.

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What's Your Number?

When you change your email address or phone number, you remember to tell your friends, family and electric cooperative.

Wait? Benton REA doesn't have your current contact information?

To keep you informed about your electric account, Benton REA member service representatives need your phone number and email address.

We will notify you before planned maintenance outages that may affect you, but we can't warn you if we cannot get a hold of you.

We're exploring better ways to communicate with you through text-outage notifications. These

notifications only work if we have your current cellphone number on file.

Having up-to-date information is vital for important member privileges such as voting in your district trustee elections and receiving capital credit retirement checks.

Don't forget to inform your other utilities, medical providers and your bank of your new number or email address.

To update your contact information or add your spouse to your Benton REA account, call us at 800-221-6987 or log in to your SmartHub account. ■



To download the SmartHub app, search for "SmartHub" in your phone's app store.

With SmartHub, you can view and update your Benton REA account information, get notifications about co-op information and pay your bill anytime, anywhere. Learn more at BentonREA.org/SmartHub.



NEW Rebates for Energy Efficient Manufactured Homes

Efficiency rebates aren't just for stick-built homes. The Northwest Energy Efficient Manufactured Housing Program (NEEM) sets the standard for highly efficient building specifications tailored for the Northwest climate.

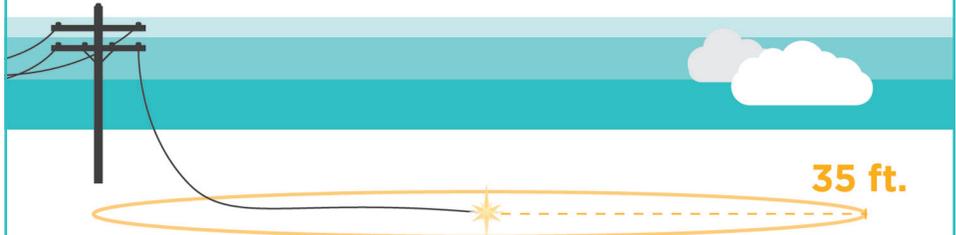
Benton REA members who purchase a NEEM-certified manufactured home qualify for one of two rebates up to \$1,400, depending upon efficiency levels.

To apply for this rebate, send a copy of your NEEM certificate to Benton REA within 90 days of the purchase date of your home.

For details about what makes a manufactured home NEEM certified and for more information about the program, call 509-786-8265 or visit BentonREA.org/rebates. ■

Downed and Dangerous

If you see a downed power line, always assume it is energized and dangerous. Avoid going near it or anything in contact with the power line.



Downed power lines can energize the ground up to **35 ft.** away - so keep your distance.



Never drive over a downed line or through water that is touching the line.



If you see a downed line, notify the local authorities immediately.



Never try to move a downed power line, even if you think the line is deenergized or if you're using a non-conductive item - this will not prevent injury or death!

Source: ESFI.org

Avoid the Big Green Box

While overhead power lines and transformers are mounted on utility poles and substations are protected by security fences, pad-mounted transformers, switch boxes and pedestals are at ground level. These "big green boxes" are utility property and may need to be accessed at any time without notice.

"We have about 3,260 pad-mounted transformers on our system," says Benton REA Operations Manager Jeff Ekrut.

In many newer subdivisions and residential developments, overhead lines are no longer the desired option. Burying power lines also reduces potential system damage from high winds and severe storms. While consumers seldom see lineworkers working on the transformers unless there are power outages, they are regularly inspected by co-op crews as they install new fault indicators.

"We can see fault indicators from the road," says Jeff, adding that one of the biggest concerns is safe access



BAD EXAMPLE—Not accessible to utility workers

when repairs or maintenance must be done. "That's why it's important that landscaping and other barriers be kept clear of co-op equipment."

Landscape for Safety of Utility Workers

Co-op employees need at least 10 feet of clearance at the opening side of a pad-mounted transformer. Approximately four feet of open space is preferable at the rear and on the sides of the metal housing.

That distance allows for tool use, including hot sticks, which are



GOOD EXAMPLE—Accessible to utility workers

typically eight feet long and used to work with energized equipment. It also ensures that one or two trained employees working on a transformer have space to maneuver should they have to back away if problems occur.

"We once had a member build a rock fence in front of a transformer, and obviously we had to have him remove it," says Jeff. "We always try to explain the risks for our lineworkers and the need for access. Most members are more than willing to cooperate once they understand."

Pad-mounted transformers are connected to high-voltage lines. Secondary lines can extend in several directions to distribute power to homes and businesses. That's why it's important to check with Benton REA before planting shrubs or trees, setting fence posts, installing sprinkler systems and digging where it might damage underground lines.

Call Before You Dig!

Because underground service continues from the transformer to your home, you should never dig anywhere in your yard without first calling 811 to find out where cables are buried.

To learn more about how you can safely beautify the area around your transformer, contact Benton REA at 509-786-8252. ■



Can you find the pad-mounted transformer in this photo? It is behind the hedge and adjacent to a fence, which block access. Because this landscaping creates a hazard for utility workers, the hedge and fence must be removed.