

May 2011

# HIGHLIGHTS

From Big Horn Rural Electric Company

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## From the Manager's Desk

Thanks to all members who attended and those who executed their proxy at the March 12, 2011 annual meeting. As a member/owner of Big Horn REA, a member's right to participate and vote on matters affecting Big Horn REA is a value in receiving power from your local electric cooperative. Big Horn also wants to thank all the committee members, volunteers, employees and others who assisted in making the meeting a success. You can log on to our website at [www.bighornrea.com](http://www.bighornrea.com) and review the reports and photos from the annual meeting.

Spring seems to have just about arrived and it looks like everyone is busy. Whether you are doing projects such as: yard work, ranching, farming, or operating equipment, Big Horn would like everyone to be safe.

Big Horn REA's Culture of Safety involves providing a safe environment for our employees and members. Our employees are trained to assess and

*continued page 3*

## Every Day Is Electrical Safety Day

Although May is National Electrical Safety Month, Big Horn REA stresses the importance of electrical safety every day of the year. We must all increase our electrical safety awareness.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI), electrical problems cause 140,000 fires across the country each year, resulting in hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries. Electrical shock kills nearly 400 people a year and injures thousands more. Most of these deaths and injuries could be avoided with an increased awareness.

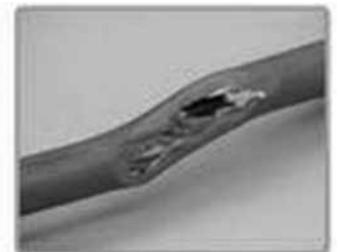
Big Horn REA would like to offer you the following safety suggestions:

- Replace or repair loose or frayed cords on all electrical devices.
- Avoid running extension cords across doorways or under carpets.
- In homes with small children, unused wall sockets and extension-cord receptacles should have plastic safety covers.
- Consider having additional circuits or outlets added by a qualified electrician so you do not have to use extension cords.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for plugging an appliance into a receptacle outlet.
- Avoid overloading outlets. Plug only one high-wattage appliance into each receptacle outlet at a time.
- If outlets or switches feel warm, shut off the circuit and have them checked by an electrician.

### Extension Cords

- Extension cords should be for temporary use only. They are not intended to replace permanent household wiring.
- Cords should be discarded if they are cracked or frayed.

- Cords should be used according to their ratings (indoor or outdoor use) and according to the power needs of the appliance that is being plugged in.
- Never nail or staple cords or use cords that are coiled or bent.



## Inside...

- Call Before You Dig.....2**
- How Much Is Too Much.....2**
- New APP For Saving Money.....4**

*continued page 3*

# Call Before You Dig



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

Homeowners often make risky assumptions about whether or not they should get their utility lines marked, but every digging job requires a call – even small projects like planting trees and shrubs. The depth of utility lines varies and there may be multiple utility lines in a common area. Digging without calling can disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, harm you and those around you and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

The Wyoming State Underground Facilities Law requires all persons who are excavating underground facilities in the state of Wyoming to call One Call of Wyoming at least 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) in advance of starting any underground projects. There are instances of emergencies where locates will need to be done sooner, but these are few and far between.

## Emergency Locate Requests

Wyoming State Law under the “Wyoming Underground Facilities Notification Act” defines an Emergency as follows: ***“Emergency means an occurrence, including loss of communications, which demands***

***immediate action to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public and to prevent loss of life, health, property or essential public services. Emergency shall include ruptures and leakage of pipelines, explosion, fires and similar instances where immediate action is necessary to prevent loss of life or significant damage to underground facilities or the environment.”***

Remember, an actual emergency locate request may be hampered in response time if a locator is responding to a bogus emergency locate request.

## Requesting a Locate is Easy

One easy phone call to 811 starts the process to get your underground utility lines marked for free. When you call 811 from anywhere in the country, your call will be routed to your local One Call Center. Local One Call Center operators will ask you for the location of your digging job and route your call to affected utility companies. Your utility companies will then send a professional locator to your location to mark your lines within a few days. Once your underground lines have been marked, you will know the approximate location of your utility lines and can dig safely, because knowing what’s below protects you and your family.

## How much is too much?

Are your electrical outlets overstuffed with power strips, extension cords, and outlet splitters? That’s not just an unsightly tripping hazard. It’s a fire hazard. Plugging more appliances, lights, and electronics into a single outlet than its circuit is meant to handle causes the receptacle or cords to overheat and potentially start an electrical fire. The Consumer Product Safety Commission attributes 3,500 fires each year to outlet issues.

How do you know if you’re pushing your outlet to the brink? Check for these common indicators of potential electrical hazards:

**Hot outlets:** If you can’t touch a cord, plug, or faceplate for more than five seconds without saying, “Ouch!” the outlet is overloaded.

**Shocks:** Small shocks from touching appliances or outlets could point to danger.

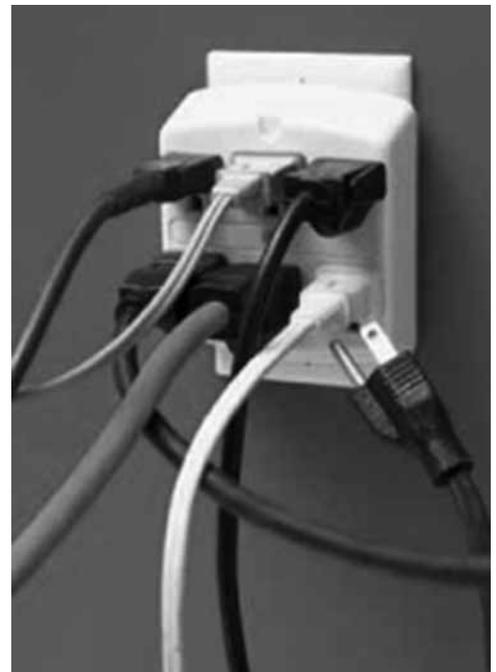
**Blown fuses:** If fuses continue to blow after you replace them, or circuit breakers constantly trip, the wiring cannot handle the outlet’s load.

**Flickering lights:** Flickering or dimming lights could indicate an overloaded outlet.

**Wavering screens:** Similarly, if your computer or TV screen wavers when a large appliance is plugged in, it could mean the outlet is overstressed.

**High-wattage appliances:** Never plug a high-wattage appliance, such as a refrigerator or dryer, into an extension cord.

Any of these symptoms could mean your home’s wiring can’t keep up with the increasing energy demands of your large appliances and electronics. Call a licensed electrician to give you an estimate for wiring repairs or upgrades.



continued from page 1

- If the cord is hot to the touch then it should be replaced with a cord that has a higher wattage capacity.
- Always unplug the cord by pulling on the plug and not the cord.

**Polarized and 3-Prong Plugs**

- Polarized plugs have one blade that is slightly bigger than the other. This design makes sure that plugs are plugged into outlets correctly and also reduces the risk of electric shock. **NEVER** shove a polarized plug into a non-polarized outlet or extension cord.
- 3-prong plugs also help to reduce the risk of electric shock. **NEVER** remove the 3<sup>rd</sup> prong in order to make it fit into a 2 prong outlet or extension cord.



**Light Bulbs**

- Check the lamp's wattage and use the appropriate watt light bulb.
- Make sure that light bulbs are screwed in securely to prevent overheating.
- Place lamps on level surfaces, away from things that can burn.
- If you smell a faint burning or rubbery smell from a lamp then the wattage level of the light bulb is too high for the lamp and it should be replaced with the appropriate bulb.



**Appliances**

- Make sure that all appliances have been tested by an independent research laboratory and be sure to follow all manufacturers' instructions carefully.
- Appliances that take a lot of power to operate, such as space heaters and halogen lamps, should be plugged directly into an outlet. These appliances should not be plugged into extension cords.
- **One Outlet One Plug!** Don't overload electric outlets with several plugs. If multiple appliances must share one outlet, be sure to use only one appliance at a time.



**Water and appliances don't mix!**

- Don't leave appliances plugged in where they may come into contact with water.
- If an appliance falls into water DO NOT reach in to pull it out. First turn off the power and unplug the appliance.
- Don't use electric appliances or take showers or baths during an electric storm. Using electricity during an electric storm increases your risk of getting an electric shock.

**Hunt for Home Electrical Hazards**

Keep an eye out for these warning signs. If any of these are present in your home there could be a risk of an electric fire or electrocution.

- Frequent power outages or blown fuses. This may indicate that your home wiring needs to be updated or repaired. Contact a licensed electrician.
- Overloaded electrical outlets
- Dim or flickering lights
- Sparks or sizzling sounds in outlets or walls
- Overheated plugs, cords or switches
- Smells of something burning or rubbery smells
- Frayed wires or cracked cords
- Feeling a mild shock or tingle when you plug in an appliance

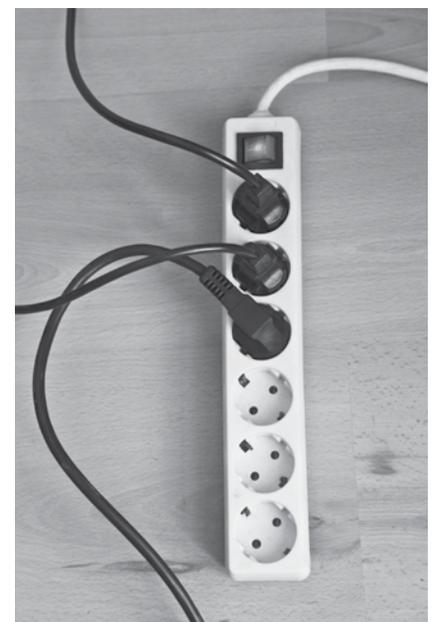
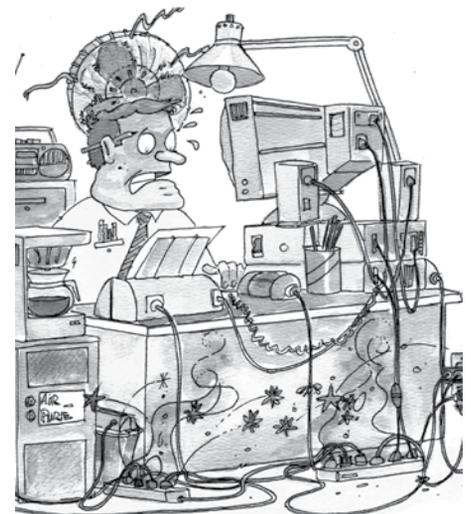
By working together, we can make a difference and create a safer, more secure environment in the workplace, at home, and in school.

continued from page 1

plan for each job and to recognize any safety hazards. Big Horn would like to remind each member to make safety a part of their job planning and activity. We value the safety of our employees, members and the public.

Take time to be safe and thanks for being a member/owner of Big Horn REA.

MAY 2011  
**National Electrical  
 Safety Month**



## Quality Member Service Update

### NEW APP FOR SAVING MONEY

*Co-op Connections Card is now on your iPhone*

Forget to bring your Co-op Connections Card with you, but still want the prescription drug discount? No problem, just whip out your phone.

The Co-op Connections Card app for the iPhone and iPod Touch is ready for download. The new, free Co-op Connections Card app is available for the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch. Once downloaded, the program prompts you to select your co-op, a choice that becomes locked in place.

“The opening screen will have the card front with the option of going to the co-op’s own Co-op Connections website,” explained Jason McGrade, Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives senior Web development and social media specialist. “If you select the card, the back of the card will display, showcasing the pharmacy discount information. That can be presented to a pharmacist who can use that information to give the discount if you don’t have your physical card in hand.”



The app features an alphabetized list of the more than 100 national deals the Co-op Connections Card currently offers. “You can select each one and that, in turn, takes you to the deal,” McGrade said. “If it’s an e-commerce deal you click the link provided, or if it’s a coupon code that information is available.”

You can also click to call merchants, as well as the local co-op employee who handles the Connections Card. Another option allows you to save the deal, archiving it to the device.

To download the app, go to the iTunes Store and in the search box type “Co-op Connections”.

Michael W. Kahn ECT.coop



## Energy Efficiency

### Tip of the Month

It may be time to replace your refrigerator. A fridge made before 1993 could cost more than \$100 each year to operate. A new ENERGY STAR qualified model could cut your related energy costs in half. In addition, newer models keep food fresher longer.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

# HIGHLIGHTS

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Call the office number: **ANYTIME**  
(307) 568-2419 or 1-800-564-2419  
After 5 p.m., weekends and holidays  
all calls will be answered by our professional answering service, who will contact the appropriate person(s).