



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 
 P.O. Box B
 1564 S. 1000 Rd, Council Grove, KS 66846
 620-767-5144
 www.flinthillsrec.com

**FLINT HILLS RURAL
 ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

NEWS

Flint Hills RECA

Board of Trustees

Roger Zimmerman
 President

Shawn Potts
 Vice President

Korby Efland
 Secretary/Treasurer

Dale Andres
 Trustee

Cary Granzow
 Trustee

Tim Miser
 Trustee

Terry Olsen
 Trustee

James Witt
 Trustee

Staff

Chuck Goeckel
 General Manager

Member Services

- ▶ Viasat Internet Services
 - ▶ Online Payment Options
 - ▶ Outside Security Lighting
 - ▶ Power Surge Protection
 - ▶ Rebate Programs
- For more information, call us at 620-767-5144 or visit our website at www.flinthillsrec.com

**This institution is an equal
 opportunity provider
 and employer**

FROM THE MANAGER

By the Community, for the Community

October is National Co-op Month



Chuck Goeckel

When you think of October, pumpkins, Halloween and beautiful fall foliage naturally come to mind. But October is notable for another reason—it's National Co-op Month! This is

the time of year when co-ops across the country, including Flint Hills RECA, celebrate who we are and more importantly, the members we serve.

Co-ops are different than other types of businesses. When the market declines to offer a product or service, or does so at a very high price, co-ops intervene to fill the need.

Similar to how Flint Hills RECA was built by members who came together to bring electricity to our community, co-ops are conveners for the common good. Your electric co-op exists to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, the members of the co-op. Equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of the members we serve.

As a co-op, we are well-

suited to meet the needs of the community because we are locally governed. Flint Hills RECA's leadership team and employees live right here in the community. Our board of directors, who helps set long-term priorities for the co-op, live locally on co-op lines. These board members have been elected to the position by neighbors like you.

We know our members (that's you!) have a valuable perspective. That's why we are continually seeking your input. Whether through community events, our social media channels or the annual meeting, we want to hear from you.

Our close connection to the commu-

Continued on page 16C ▶

Cooperative Principle No. 7: Concern for Community

Cooperative involvement in the community goes beyond business. It includes youth programs, health fairs, community events and more.



October is National Co-op Month

Keep Cyber Invaders at Bay: Smart Device Technology Tips

Although not an exhaustive list and not written by security experts, Safe Electricity and Flint Hills RECA recommend these basic tips to make your smart devices less hackable and more secure:

- ▶ **NEVER** click a link in an email claiming to be from a security- or smart-home related company, even if it looks official. Scammers and hackers get sign-in information and passwords this way, which they can use to hack your smart technology.
- ▶ Although tempting, don't use the same passwords for all of your devices.
- ▶ Absolutely change factory-set passwords provided by the manufacturer.
- ▶ Make your passwords complex and challenging.
- ▶ If you do receive an email from your smart device manufacturer, see if the email address the company used is the same as the one they have used to contact you in the past. These emails should be general in nature and should never ask for personal or login information.
- ▶ Never give out login, password or other personal information in an email, over the phone, or for any other reason unless you are the one contacting the company directly via a verified phone number or other trusted method of contact.
- ▶ Regularly update the device's software so it is protected by the latest security.
- ▶ Unless the hacker makes himself known, it can be hard to detect if a smart device has been hacked until the obvious happens.
- ▶ If it has been hacked, your gadget might be slower than usual, unresponsive or may compulsively reboot.
- ▶ If you are tech savvy, keep watch on the IP addresses that access the devices.

DISCLAIMER: Tips are designed to increase awareness. For expert and in-depth technology advice, contact an IT professional or manufacturer. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Smart Devices: They're Definitely Smart, But Not Always Secure

For many of us, buying and using technology to make our homes smarter and interconnected is as tempting as walking through a candy store as a kid. (Sour Patch Kids and Pixy Stix anyone?)

Although not found in every household, many U.S. homes have one or two components, such as a smart security system complete with cameras, a smart thermostat, or a know-it-all "voice assistant" such as Amazon's Alexa. The rest of our homes range from doing things the old fashioned way without smart devices to having a home decked out in every smart technology one could imagine.

According to Statista, a company specializing in market and consumer data, North Americans are forecast to spend 63 billion dollars in the smart home market in 2022. And that's nothing to sneeze at. (But if we do, millions of Americans may hear Alexa say "Bless you.")

Although convenient, who doesn't want a real-time glimpse of who is ringing the doorbell or hear Google Assistant recite a recipe—smart devices come with their own set of security concerns.

Canada's CBC News hired hackers (ethically responsible ones, of course) to hack a family's smart home and they got in, literally. The group only needed a white van, a team of three hackers and a phishing email to remotely unlock the front door.

This eye-opening scenario is not intended to scare people; rather we en-

courage you to give your smart devices serious thought before diving in. Security measures for smart devices are similar to the steps we should take in our daily life to protect us against seedy scammers and hackers everywhere.

For example, be leery of emails or calls asking for personal information such as login information or passwords. And although everyone loves to use the same passwords like "abc123" for everything, doing so can make your smart devices vulnerable. Note: it's not a good idea to use "abc123." Be creative and make them hard to crack. And although it seems obvious, never use the factory-set password; change it immediately.

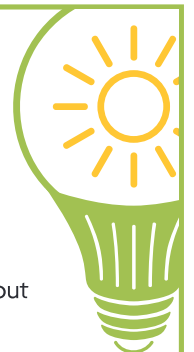
Many tech companies are considering, and others have already switched, to two-step authentication for the smart devices they sell. Although the extra step can feel like a pain, the two-step process is a good thing; it is a valuable step in keeping you and your family safe and your conversations private.

Without the code provided in the second security step, outsiders can't access your device or account—even if they guessed your SweetHomeAlabama1973 password (or whatever).

For more in-depth technology advice, consult an IT professional. For more information, visit SafeElectricity.org. And if your password is actually SweetHomeAlabama1973, we apologize; it was used for illustrative purposes only.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Heating requires more energy than any other system in your home, typically making up about 42% of your energy bill. With proper equipment maintenance and upgrades, you can save about 30% on your energy bill. **Source:** energy.gov



It's Large and In Charge: Respect the Mighty Substation

You may live near or drive by a substation each day and not give it much thought unless you happen to be an electrical engineer or utility employee.

Although they look like something that could transform into a giant-sized, building-stomping futuristic robot, substations play an important role in providing electricity to your work or home.

As most people know, fenced-in substations are part of the electrical generation, transmission and distribution system. Transformers are contained inside many of them, and their job is to transform voltage from high to low or vice versa depending on its location on the distribution path.

There are three types of transmission substations: step-up, step-down and distribution. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration:

- ▶ A step-up version receives electric power from a nearby generating facility and uses a large power transformer to increase the voltage so it can travel to distant locations.
- ▶ Step-down transmission substations are located at switching points on an electrical grid and connect different parts of the electrical system.
- ▶ Distribution substations are located near end-users like you and change

By the Community, for the Community *Continued from page 16A* ▶

ity ensures we get a firsthand perspective on local priorities, thereby enabling us to make more informed decisions on long-term investments.

Another feature that sets our co-op apart from a traditional utility is one of our core principles, "Concern for Community." We participate in the Electric Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp, where we take our community's brightest young people to Steamboat Springs Colorado, for a weeklong immersion to experience leadership in action.

Ultimately, the larger community benefits from these programs because of

voltages to lower levels to power homes and businesses.

Besides transformers, substations usually house switches, protective devices and control equipment. In large substations, circuit breakers are used to interrupt any short circuits or overloads that may occur.

Stay Safe Around Substations

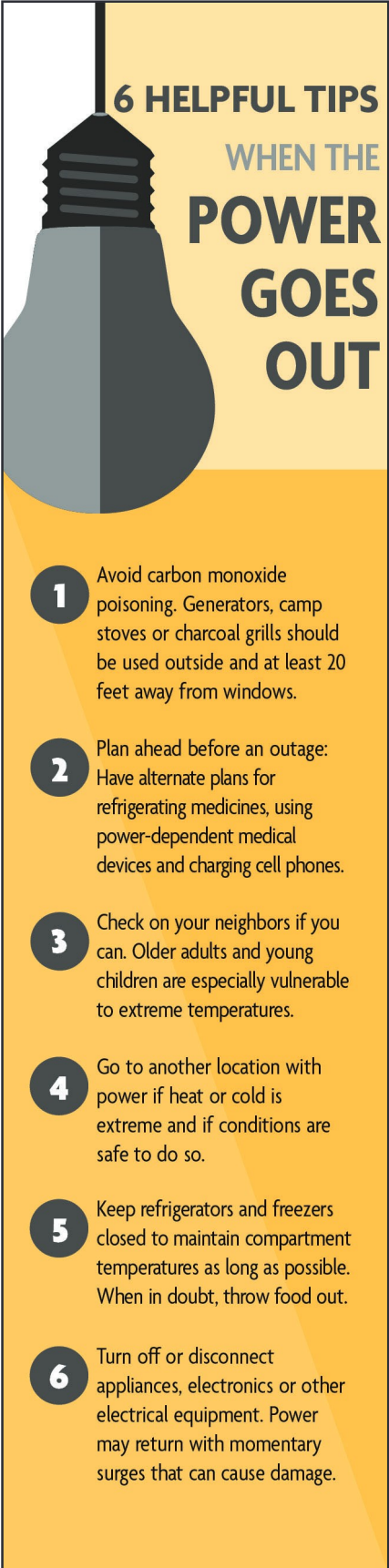
Substations carry high voltages of electricity and they should be respected. Remember:

- ▶ NEVER go near a substation.
- ▶ Teach children to NEVER go near a substation or climb its fence to retrieve a ball or pet. Let them know they should always stay away and tell a parent or adult, who should call us to report the incident.
- ▶ In general, teach children about the dangers of electricity from a young age.
- ▶ If a transformer near your home catches on fire, DO NOT try to put the fire out yourself, water and electricity don't mix. Call 911 to report the fire.
- ▶ If you see an issue with or notice something unusual about a substation, transformer or power line, contact us. Never try to address a problem yourself.

you and your neighbors. You empower the co-op through your membership and through your participation in and support of these programs.

We hope you will think of Flint Hills RECA as more than your energy provider, but instead as a local business that supports this community and powers economic development and prosperity for the people.

We will continue to learn from our members about their priorities so we can better serve you—because your electric co-op was built by the community, for the community.



6 HELPFUL TIPS WHEN THE POWER GOES OUT

- 1 Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Generators, camp stoves or charcoal grills should be used outside and at least 20 feet away from windows.
- 2 Plan ahead before an outage: Have alternate plans for refrigerating medicines, using power-dependent medical devices and charging cell phones.
- 3 Check on your neighbors if you can. Older adults and young children are especially vulnerable to extreme temperatures.
- 4 Go to another location with power if heat or cold is extreme and if conditions are safe to do so.
- 5 Keep refrigerators and freezers closed to maintain compartment temperatures as long as possible. When in doubt, throw food out.
- 6 Turn off or disconnect appliances, electronics or other electrical equipment. Power may return with momentary surges that can cause damage.