Tim Stewart,
CEO/Manager

RECOGNIZE, RESPECT, REPORT

Brothers learn dangerous lesson about transformer safety

Clark Electric Cooperative
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

It's May, and Clark Electric Cooperative is celebrating National Electrical Safety Month. While safety for our members is top priority year-round, Electrical Safety Month is a time to acknowledge the importance of safety.

I came across the following article from SafeElectricity.org that illustrates just how important electrical safety is.

* * *

On an early spring day 20 years ago, Aaron and Brett Studer anxiously awaited the opportunity to play outside.

"We had just moved into a new house and everything was kind of new," explains older brother Brett. "We were still getting the feel for everything, and it felt like every nook and cranny of the property needed to be explored. So we were trying to get into whatever we could."

The brothers, only 5 and 8 years old, were innocently unaware of what they would get themselves into this particular day.

It was the day before Easter, and while their parents entertained visiting family inside the home, the boys ran outside to play with wooden swords. Aaron remembers, "We had these wooden swords and we would always pretend to be medieval and do sword fights."

As the boys staged a play fight with their wooden swords, they made their way toward the back corner of their new home's yard. However, they didn't know anything about the green metal boxes around which they would soon be playing. Brett found one of these metal boxes unlocked and pulled the top off. Aaron spied a big stick nearby that he thought would make a great backup sword. After picking it up, he stuck this wet stick inside the open box.

Immediately, there was a flash and a loud explosion. Meg Studer, the boys' mother, recalls, "The lights flashed in the home and the TV went on and off." The power went out for multiple houses on the block.

"I saw sparks coming out of the green boxes," continues Meg, "and both of my boys running toward me and screaming. Right away we saw that Aaron's face was black, and I thought that it was soot."

While Meg attended to her son's injuries and waited for paramedics to arrive, her husband ran outside to deal with a small fire that had started around the boxes. "My husband went rushing out there to see what was going on and decided he would try to put the fire out with a metal shovel. He didn't realize it was an electric fire, and once he hit the fire with a metal shovel, it flew out of his hands," says Meg.

Aaron was rushed to the hospital. There, it was determined that he had not received an electrical shock. However, he did suffer second- and third-degree burns on his face.

Meg remembers her son in the hospital after the accident, "His entire face was completely bandaged, not recognizable at all."

"I couldn't really cry at all either, because my face was just smoldering," recalls Aaron. Fortunately, he did not have any permanent scarring. Brett luckily escaped with no injuries.

Both boys learned important lessons about electrical safety that day. Brett remembers seeing the live wire after removing the top cover on of the box. "It was fortunate that I didn't touch it," he explains. "To a kid, you don't even know what a power box is or what it holds."

The Studer family is now partnering with Safe Electricity's "Teach Learn Care TLC" campaign to share their experience in hopes of helping others stay safe. "I had no idea. It wasn't even anything that I really ever thought about," reflects Meg.

Electricity gets to your home in one of two ways: overhead or underground. If the distribution lines are underground, service pedestals and equipment may be housed in these outdoor boxes or cabinets.

Safe Electricity urges you to:

- Recognize that these boxes contain electrical equipment.
- Respect the equipment and the boxes—do not open, tamper with, or obstruct access to them.
- If there is any damage, such as a hole or broken lock, immediately report it to your utility.

(Continued on page 16)

DIRECTORS RECENTLY EARN COOPERATIVE CREDENTIALS

For electric cooperatives to thrive in this time of change and uncertainty, it is vital that directors have a solid understanding of the electric cooperative business model, a diverse set of knowledge and skills, up-to-date knowledge of industry changes, and a commitment to learn throughout their service on the board of directors. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Director Certificate Programs are specifically designed to help electric cooperative directors understand the complexity of a very challenging industry. The certification requirements consist of three parts as follows:

Right to left: Allen Jicinsky, Charles Lindner, Herman Seebandt, and Marvin Verkuilen.

Credentialed Cooperative Director Certification (CCD) – The CCD is a set of five courses that focus on basic governance knowledge and the essential skills required of cooperative directors. The CCD prepares directors to fulfill their fiduciary duty as elected officials serving on behalf of their membership.

Board Leadership Certification (BLC) – After completing the CCD, and as directors continue their board service, they need to stay current on industry issues and evolving expectations for governance. The BLC courses have been grouped into specialty areas such as power supply, finance, risk management, technology, and governance.

Director Gold Certification (DGC) – This credential recognizes directors who have earned their CCD and BLC credentials and are committed to continuing their education throughout their service on the board. For a director to earn the DGC, he or she must hold the CCD and BLC and earn additional credits from the Board Leadership Certificate series of courses.

Congratulations to Directors Allen Jicinsky, Herman Seebandt, Marvin Verkuilen, and Chuck Lindner, who each earned the Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership Certifications.

Recognize, Respect, Report

(Continued from previous page)

Familiarize yourself and family members with any electrical boxes on your property. Meg advises other parents, "Look at the electrical boxes in your back yard, and check to make sure that they're secure and locked."

Pad-mount transformers often require larger enclosures. The transformer reduces the voltage of incoming electricity to a lower voltage for household use. While some homeowners consider pad-mount transformers an eyesore, it is important to not obstruct access to them.

Do not bury, install fences around, or plant immediately around electrical boxes in an effort to disguise them. These barriers may make the cabinet difficult to find and block access, should routine maintenance need to be done or an emergency occur. While specific regulations vary by location, it is a good idea to maintain a minimum clearance of at least 10 feet to the front of the transformer and 2 to 5 feet to the rear and each side. Check local municipal or county codes as well as utility codes regarding how to landscape around this equipment.

The Studers are very lucky that their situation was not worse. "That could have been the end of my story right there that day," says Brett.

From his close encounter with electricity, Aaron advises, "You know, you've got an electrical box in the back and nobody really thinks to go check to see if it's got a padlock on it, and that's definitely something that I recommend doing. I know I sure will when I have my own home."

Learn more about safety around electricity and see the Studers' story at SafeElectricity.org.

GIVE YOUR AIR CONDITIONER A SPRING TUNE-UP

Spring is a good time for maintaining your air conditioner. Chances are you welcomed the cooler temperatures when they arrived last fall and turned off your air-conditioning unit without a lot of thought. Now, before you turn it back on again for the season, you'll want to make sure your unit is clean and ready to work properly and efficiently. If you keep the coils of your air conditioner clean, it will improve your comfort and reduce your electricity costs this summer.

Start by inspecting the outdoor condensing unit. The large outdoor coil—it looks like a car radiator—is where heat is dissipated from your home. The fan in the condensing unit has to move a lot of air through the coil, so make sure there are no airflow restrictions around the unit. Cut nearby grass, shrubs, and branches so they are at least 3 feet away at the side and 5 feet away overhead.

Most condenser coils are loaded with pollen and dust even when you can't see it. The longest a condenser should go without cleaning is two or three years, depending on how much it operates during the summer. If you use your air conditioner for four months or more, annual cleaning is an excellent idea. Turn off the power to the unit and remove any visible grass and lint from the fins and/or louvers with an old hairbrush or whisk broom. Then put on a pair of rubber gloves and spray biodegradable outdoor coil cleaner into the coil. Wait five or 10 minutes and flush the coil with a gentle wash spray.

Your indoor coil might also need cleaning, even though you can't easily see it. If your air conditioner's filter or blower is dirty, then your indoor coil is probably dirty, too. This is usually a job for professionals, unless you have easy access, as with a central heat pump. To help keep your indoor coil clean, make sure your filter fits well, is easy to change, and that you change it regularly. Have your air conditioning contractor make improvements to the filter, if needed, so it is easy to get to. Change the filter often to help keep your indoor air conditioner coil clean and reduce energy consumption.

Source: John Krigger, Saturn Resource Management, www.residential-energy.com

To help reduce the demand for electric power during the summer season, Clark Electric Cooperative offers an Air Conditioner Load Management Program Incentive. Each central air conditioner (AC) unit being managed during a period of high demand is shut off for approximately 20 minutes and then allowed to resume cooling for 20 minutes. This means they are still cooling about half of the time. Many members say they don't even realize the cooperative is managing the unit because they don't notice any temperature change inside the home.

If you have a central air conditioning unit and it is not part of the load management program, consider trying it for a summer. You will receive a one-time $25 bill credit after the load management switch is installed on the AC, and then you will see an $8 credit on your electric bill for the consumption months of June, July, and August. Call Clark Electric Cooperative at 1-800-272-6188 for questions, or to sign up. Certain restrictions may apply.

$8/month credit on your electric bill during the summer cooling season

Congratulations to Kent Weigel

Kent has satisfactorily served an apprenticeship at Clark Electric and has now completed the hours of related instruction required to be recognized as a journeyman meter technician. Kent was hired as a lineworker in May of 2006 and has worked hard to achieve the next step in his career goals at Clark Electric Cooperative.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

Youth Leadership Congress set for July 26–28

Electric cooperatives from across Wisconsin will sponsor local high school students at the 54th Youth Leadership Congress (YLC) July 26–28 on the campus of UW–River Falls. The YLC is jointly sponsored by UW–River Falls and Wisconsin electric cooperatives, and it's designed to develop the next generation of community leaders.

The event will feature leadership seminars led by nationally acclaimed speakers, hands-on activities, team-building exercises, cooperative education, and fun events, all designed to develop and enhance your leadership potential. Clark Electric Cooperative has sponsored students to this event since its inception. We believe in developing the potential of tomorrow's leaders. The YLC is a fun and educational event, designed by students who were elected by their peers at the previous year's conference to serve on the WECA Youth Board.

There is no cost to the student for attending the event. Registration and travel expenses will be covered by the cooperative. If you are going to be a sophomore or a junior in high school this coming fall and would like to be a sponsored representative for Clark Electric Cooperative, contact your FFA or FBLA advisor.

Tim Stewart, CEO/Manager
1209 West Dall-Berg Road, P.O. Box 190, Greenwood, WI 54437
email us at info@cecoop.com or tnelson01@cecoop.com
www.cecoop.com

Clark Electric Cooperative
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner