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Do you know how to be safe around

ELECTRICITY?

Safe on the Bus



On a snowy April morning in 2016, Clint Shults was driving a school bus to take students to a Future Farmers of America (FFA) competition in Rangely, Colorado. The team's horse judging coach, Silvia, followed the bus in her car. Heavy, wet snow had been accumulating,

and the bus snagged a power line just as it was falling to the ground under the weight of the snow.

"We started dragging power lines for the next at least 100 yards — it was an unmistakable sound," Clint said. From behind the bus, Silvia witnessed several bursts of fire.

"I knew we were in pretty big trouble," said Silvia. "I didn't want to witness my horse-judging family and friends in a terrible accident."

Fortunately, Clint, dispatch, and first responders knew the right steps to take to keep everyone safe.

They are partnering with Safe Electricity's "Teach Learn Care TLC" campaign so that others know how to stay safe if they ever find themselves in a similar situation.

- Stay calm, and stay inside the vehicle.
- Call 911.
- Warn others to stay away from the vehicle.
- Stay seated, and do not exit the vehicle until utility personnel say it is okay to do so.
- If you must exit the vehicle because it is on fire, jump clear of it with your feet together and without touching the vehicle and ground at the same time. Keeping your feet together, shuffle or "bunny hop" to safety.

Fortunately, for these Colorado students, "everybody did everything right," said local Sheriff Anthony Mazzola.

"We were very relieved," said bus driver Clint. "We dodged a big bullet, and went on to have a good day at the competition."

Learn & Play at Energy Safe Kids

Learning is fun at our Energy Safe Kids website, where young people discover the importance of energy safety and efficiency. And teachers love it, too!

Visit [EnergySafeKids.org/AmerenIllinois](https://www.EnergySafeKids.org/AmerenIllinois) for videos, games, activities and teacher's guides.

Outdoor Playtime

Before children head outside to play this spring, teach them to look up and look out for power lines. Be sure they understand the importance of keeping themselves and play items away from power lines.

Children also need to understand the dangers of climbing trees near power lines. If it's touching or near a power line, a tree can become energized with electricity, causing electric shock or death for anyone climbing it.

Kites should only be flown during good weather in large open areas like a park or a field — far away from overhead power lines or other electrical equipment.

In addition, teach your children not to play around pad-mounted transformers and to never enter an electrical substation. Substations hold deadly amounts of electricity and should only be entered by professionals.



Keep Your Family Safe During a Flood

The prospect of an electrical accident is probably not top of mind when you're dealing with a flooded basement, room, or even outdoors. But flooding can create hidden hazards related to your energy service, so follow these tips to stay safe during a flood:

- Never enter a flooded basement or any area where water may be in contact with electrical outlets, appliances or cords. The water could be energized.
- Before entering storm-damaged buildings, make sure electricity and natural gas sources are turned off.
- Never operate electrical appliances or devices or touch electrical switches, outlets or cords if you are standing in water or on a wet surface, or if you are wet.
- If an electrical or natural gas appliance has been in contact with water, have a professional check it before you attempt to use it.



Downed Lines = DANGER

Electric power lines can carry power even after being knocked to the ground, so always assume downed wires are energized and dangerous. Stay away and warn others to do the same. And remember — a downed power line can energize anything it's touching, from a fence or tree to a puddle of water.

Take special care following severe weather, when brush and debris can conceal fallen or sagging power lines. If you see a downed or sagging power line, call Ameren Illinois at 1.800.755.5000 immediately to report the situation.



Prevent Deadly Shocks Check Boats and Docks

Electricity and water are always a dangerous combination. A fun day at the lake can quickly turn deadly if a swimmer touches an energized dock ladder or unknowingly swims into water that is energized from an improperly grounded circuit or frayed wires beneath a boat.

Marinas should comply with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and National Electrical Code (NEC) standards. If you own a boat or dock, have a professional electrical contractor who is familiar with marine codes and standards:

- Inspect them at least once a year
- Install ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) breakers on the circuits feeding electricity to the dock
- Bond the metal frame of docks to connect all metal parts to the alternating current (AC) safety ground at the power source

When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors

The safest place to ride out thunderstorms is indoors. However, lightning voltage can still enter your home through phone lines, electrical wires, cables and plumbing.



In fact, about one-third of lightning injuries occur indoors.

To stay safe, follow these precautions while you wait for the storm to pass:

- Do not touch corded electrical devices such as computers, televisions, or cords during a thunderstorm. Take off headsets and stop playing video games. Only use cordless or cell phones to make emergency calls during an electrical storm.
- Avoid water and contact with plumbing. Do not wash your hands, take a shower or wash dishes or clothes.
- Do not lie on concrete floors or lean against concrete walls.
- Don't forget your pets. Dog houses are not lightning-safe, and dogs chained to trees can easily fall victim to a lightning strike.

Safety Is a Do-It-Yourself Job

Spring inspires many do-it-yourselfers to tackle home improvement projects. Follow these electrical safety tips to complete outdoor jobs safely:

- Look up and around for power lines. Keep yourself and tools at least 10 feet away from them.
- Make sure outdoor outlets are equipped with a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) or use a portable one.
- Don't use electric tools if it's raining or the ground is wet.
- Hire a licensed professional for jobs that involve working with or around electricity.

Visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safepower.org) to learn more.

Plan Ahead When Planting Trees

By planting the right tree in the right place, you can prevent future safety hazards and a common cause of power outages. Research tree selections and consider the height of a tree at maturity. Tall-growing trees should be planted at least 20 feet away from power lines and 50 feet away to avoid future pruning.

To ensure that tree roots do not interfere with underground utilities, call JULIE at 811 to have underground services marked before you plant. Learn more at MySafeTrees.com.

Planning a home improvement project?

Consider Clearances First

Before you begin construction on that new room, deck or garage, consider utility clearances and easements. Remember — all structures must be located a safe distance from overhead and underground utility equipment, and comply with easements and National Electric Safety Code (NESC) requirements. Ask your contractor to check for any utility easements and clearance requirements affecting your property before you break ground.



Dial Before You Dig

Before you begin any project that involves digging, call JULIE at 811.

This will ensure that potentially hazardous underground public utilities are located and marked, so you can dig safely. The service is free, and it's the law.



Use Generators Safely

Portable or permanently installed standby generators can come in handy during long-term power outages. However, if not installed and used properly, generators can be dangerous.

Always notify Ameren Illinois before installing back-up generation and use a qualified electrician to safely install your equipment. A transfer switch is required on permanent generators to protect you, your neighbors and repair crews from dangerous “backfeed.”



May is National Electrical Safety Month, but make safety a year-round practice. Learn more at SafeElectricity.org.

