Safety Tips From Nueces Electric Cooperative

- Lightning
- Flooding
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At Nueces Electric Cooperative, your safety is one of our primary concerns. One of the best ways to stay safe is to follow the Boy Scout motto: Be prepared. Knowing what to do when you encounter a downed power line or what to tell your child before he rides the school bus can save lives. Here are some tips to follow when confronting an array of safety issues.

**SEVERE WEATHER**

*Lightning Storms! Are You Ready?  
Flash Floods! Are You Ready?  
Tornadoes! Are You Ready?  
Don’t Blow Off Hurricanes  
Ice Isn’t Always Nice  
Lines Down—But Not Out*

**AT HOME**

*Severe Weather? Tune In!  
Pack Your Emergency Kit Now  
Be Cool With Electric Heaters  
Tree Trimming  
Tree Climbing*

**AT PLAY**

*On Board With Boating Safety  
Smooth Sailing  
Pool Safety Tips  
Straight Shooting on Safety  
Only Crackpots Take Shots*

**AT LARGE**

*School Safety ABCs  
Cool Tips for Hot Weather  
Cultivate Farm Safety*
SEVERE WEATHER

LIGHTNING

Lightning strikes kill more Americans than tornadoes or hurricanes. Don’t take chances with this deadly force of nature.

Lightning safety rules:
• Move to low ground.
• Avoid open fields.
• Do not seek shelter under a tree. Trees are easy targets for lightning.
• At the beach, or in a swimming pool, get out of the water immediately.
• Go inside a building, and stay away from windows and doors.
• Stay away from metal objects.
• Avoid electric appliances and metal plumbing.
• Get off the phone.
• Do not touch metal objects, such as golf clubs or bicycles.
• Inside a car is relatively safe, but don’t touch interior metal.
• If your hair stands on end, you may be a target. Crouch low on the balls of your feet and try not to touch the ground with your knees or hands.

FLOODING

Flooding is the leading cause of weather-related fatalities in Texas. The simple decisions you make can mean the difference between life and death. Take the high road when it comes to flood safety. Your life depends on it.

Flood safety rules:
• Never drive through water on a road. It can be deeper than it appears. Floodwaters can damage roadways, creating invisible sink holes or washed out bridges.
• Quickly leave your car if it stalls in water. It takes only 2 feet of water to push a 3,000 pound car downstream.
• Don’t attempt to walk through rapidly running water. As little as 6 inches can knock adults off their feet.
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- Keep an emergency kit in your car, including a flashlight with extra batteries, drinking water and a battery-operated radio.
- If you have a cell phone, program the number for police or fire department rescue.

TORNADOES

More tornadoes strike Texas than any other state. Sophisticated warning systems exist, but they’re no substitute for preparedness and smart action.

Tornado safety rules:
- At home or in the office, go to the lowest floor. Stay away from windows.
- Go to a place in the center of the building, such as a closet, bathroom or interior hallway. Protect your head with a pillow.
- If you live in a mobile home, go outside. Lie down in a ditch or low spot. Cover your head with your arms.
- If you’re in a car, get out. Never try to outrun a tornado. Take shelter in the nearest building, or lie face down in a ditch with your arms over your head.
- Know the difference between a “warning” and a “watch.”
  
  Tornado Watch: Conditions are right for a tornado. Watch the sky. Tornado Warning: A tornado has been spotted, take cover immediately.

HURRICANES

Any time a hurricane approaches the Texas coast, you’re likely to be reminded to take precautions. But the time for planning should begin well before hurricane season arrives.

To prepare yourself and your home for hurricanes:
- Develop a plan for installing covers for windows.
- Don’t waste time taping windows. When a 100 mph wind blows an object at your window, tape won’t stop it.
- Remove weak and dead trees and limbs on your property.
SEVERE WEATHER

- Know whether your home is in a zone that could be flooded.
- Have a “grab and run” bag ready with important papers (like your homeowner’s insurance policy) and prescription medicines in the event you have to evacuate.
- Have a plan in place for where you will go if you evacuate, the route you will take, and how others can contact you.
- Have a survival kit ready with nonperishable food, water, a first-aid kit and other things you may need.
- Keep a battery-powered radio handy. And don’t forget the extra batteries.
- Don’t hesitate to evacuate, especially if you are living in a manufactured home or a house that may not be sturdy enough to stand up to the wind.
- Do not touch or move downed utility lines. Even if the line looks “dead,” do not touch it and make sure others stay clear of the line. Call your electric co-op immediately.
- Keep refrigerators and freezers closed if your power goes out. Open them only if absolutely necessary.
- If you use a standby generator, make sure you have all required safety equipment properly installed.

ICE STORMS

Although much of the state is unaccustomed to snow and ice, temperatures can fall below freezing even in South Texas. Wet snow and ice snap tree branches and cause electric lines to sag.

To make our families safe and comfortable during a winter power outage:
- Report any outages.
- Turn off electrical appliances that were operating at the time the power went off, including your heating system. Leave one light on so you’ll know when service has been restored.
- Keep warm by closing off rooms you don’t need and use only safe sources of heat, like a wood stove. Do not burn charcoal indoors—it releases carbon monoxide, which is deadly. If you operate lanterns or fuel-fired cook stoves or heaters, make sure that you have adequate ventilation.
SEVERE WEATHER

to keep harmful fumes from accumulating.
• Don’t drive unless absolutely necessary until road conditions improve. If you must drive, go slowly and pump your brakes to stop.
• Be careful not to slip on treacherous ice.

DOWNED LINES

Weather and car accidents are the main causes of downed power lines. Always stay away and warn others to stay clear of power lines. Even if they don’t bum, spark or “dance,” downed lines can be dangerous—they can carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or even death.

Follow these rules:
• If you see a downed power line, move away from the line and anything touching it.
• The proper way to move away from the line is to shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times to minimize the chance for a human path of electric current.
• If someone is in direct or indirect contact with the downed line, do not touch the person. Call 911 instead.
• Don’t try to move a downed power line or anything in contact with the line by using another object such as a broom or stick.
• Don’t drive over downed power lines.
• If you are in your car and it is in contact with a downed line, stay in your car. Honk your horn for help but tell others to stay away from your vehicle. Call 911 if you have a cell phone or ask passersby to do it.
The NOAA weather radio network is expanding in coverage and capability, making it an invaluable tool. For as little as $20, anyone can have access to potentially life-saving emergency messages whenever and wherever they need it.

Battery-operated NOAA radios can be invaluable.

- NOAA provides continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information directly from the National Weather Service. When severe weather threatens your area, the broadcast activates an alarm and turns on the radio so you can hear critical, potentially life-saving messages.
- NOAA weather radios can take advantage of an even greater tool: the “all hazards” radio network. These broadcasts provide warning and post-event information for a host of other threats including natural and technological hazards.
- NOAA weather radios can also receive broadcasted AMBER alerts for missing children.

EMERGENCY KIT

If you put together an emergency supply kit now, you and your family will be ready for almost anything.

Here’s what you should include in your kit:

- First-aid kit
- Cash (banks and ATMs may be unavailable in a power outage)
- Battery-operated radio
- Flashlight (and extra batteries)
- Important documents and records, photo IDs, proof of residence
- Three-day supply of nonperishable food
- Three gallons of bottled water per person
- Coolers for food and ice storage
- Fire extinguisher
- Blankets, sleeping bags and extra clothing
**AT HOME**

- Prescription medications, written copies of prescriptions, hearing aids and other special medical items
- Eyeglasses and sunglasses
- Extra keys
- Toilet paper, clean-up supplies, duct tape, tarp, rope
- Can opener, knife, tools
- Booster cables, road maps

**ELECTRIC HEATERS**

*Space heaters are meant to supply supplemental heat, not to replace your home's heating system. In fact, if used incorrectly, space heaters can pose fire and burn risks.*

**Rules when using your portable electric heater:**
- Read and follow the manufacturer’s warnings and the use and care guidelines before using a space heater.
- Space heaters need space. Keep them at least 3 feet away from any combustible material such as bedding, clothing, draperies, furniture and rugs.
- Never use space heaters around unsupervised children and pets.
- Always turn the heater off and unplug it when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Plug space heaters directly into the outlet; do not use an extension cord.
- Electric space heaters use a lot of electricity. Plug your heater into a circuit with as little else on it as possible.
- Space heaters should be used only for supplemental heat. Don’t use them to dry clothing, cook food, thaw pipes, or warm bedding

**TREE TRIMMING**

*We love our trees, but when trees and branches are too close to power lines, they can cause power outages, fire hazards and safety concerns.*

**Tree trimming rules:**
- If a tree or a large branch is touching or falls on an
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electric line, call your electric cooperative immediately. Tree sap is an excellent conductor of electricity, so a
downed branch on a line is an electrocution hazard as well as a fire hazard.

- Never trim trees that grow close to power lines; that is a job for professionals. Call your electric co-op for assistance and guidance.
- Don’t allow children to climb trees or build tree houses close to power lines.
- When planting a tree, plan ahead. At maturity, your trees should not be within 10 feet of a power line.
- Plant appropriate distances from all power lines—those along the street or right-of-way, as well as those running to your home and outbuildings.

TREE CLIMBING

Kids. They don’t always know—or remember—what can be dangerous, so it’s up to all of us to watch out for their safety. The Number One safety rule for everyone to remember is: Don’t touch a power line or anything that’s touching the power line. No one can tell simply by looking at a line whether it is energized or not, and contact with a power line can be deadly. Remember, electricity always seeks the easiest path to reach the ground, and unfortunately, human beings are good conductors of electricity.

Tree climbing rules:
- Don’t plant trees or install tall playground equipment under or near power lines.
- Don’t build tree houses in trees near electric lines.
- Don’t allow children to climb trees growing near electric lines.
- Teach your children to always look up to check for power lines before climbing trees or any tall objects.
- Keep children away from any ladders, poles or work equipment that may be near power lines.
- Set a good example by following these rules yourself.
Did you know that people who hunt or fish from boats have one of the highest boat fatality rates? Or that more people die from falling off small boats (16 feet and under) than larger ones?

Here are some tips for accident-free boating:

- Be weather wise. Bring a portable radio to check weather reports.
- Bring extra gear you may need. A flashlight and extra batteries, matches, a map, flares, first-aid kit, sunglasses, and sunscreen should be kept in a watertight container or pouch.
- Tell someone where you’re going, who is with you, and how long you’ll be gone.
- Ventilate after fueling. Open hatches, run blower, and carefully sniff for gasoline fumes in the fuel and engine areas before starting your engine.
- Anchor from the bow, not the stern. Use an anchor line length at least five times longer than the water depth.
- Know your boat’s capacity. Don’t overload it or put an oversize motor on it.
- Stay out of the water during a storm. If you’re already in the water when a storm threatens, get out as quickly, and safely, as possible.

Don’t let a safety accident spoil your boating fun. Remember these important rules and make sure that others observe them, too.

Rules for sailing:

- Before you put your boat in the water, take time to visually survey your marina or favorite launching area. Note any overhead wires and share the information with others.
- Stepping your mast or sailing anywhere near an overhead power line is dangerous! Masts, fishing poles or
tall radio antennae could contact overhead wires.

- Make a habit of looking up to check for lines before moving or rigging your vessel.
- Check navigation charts for the location of any underwater cables, and don’t take the chance of disturbing these cables by anchoring your boat near them.
- Stay out of the water during a storm. If you’re already in the water when a storm threatens, get out as quickly, and safely, as possible.

Don’t be all wet. Summer pool-time fun and safety go hand in hand:

Safe swimming rules:
- Keep electric radios, TVs, clocks, barbecues, lights and other electrical appliances at least 10 feet from a pool and wet surfaces. Use battery-powered appliances whenever possible.
- Electric appliances should not be used outdoors unless they are equipped with a heavy-duty cord and three-prong plug.
- Swimming pools should be well away from electric wires to avoid the risk of hitting the wires with long-handed cleaning equipment.
- All outdoor electrical outlets should be weatherproof and equipped with a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). This is especially important in damp locations where more protection is necessary.
- Check with your electric co-op before you dig to make sure you know the location of buried electrical lines.
- Label power switches for pool, hot tub and spa equipment, and lighting.
- If you think you are being shocked while in the water, move away from the source of the shock. Get out of the water, if possible, without using a metal ladder.
- Stay out of the water during a storm. If you’re already in the water when a storm threatens, get out as quickly, and safely, as possible.
Texans love to hunt. Nature beckons. There’s suspense and excitement and escape from the daily routine.

Here are the “ten commandments” of shooting safety:

- Always point the muzzle of your gun in a safe direction.
- Treat every firearm or bow with the same respect you would show a loaded gun or nocked arrow.
- Be sure of your target.
- Unload firearms and unstring conventional bows when not in use.
- Handle firearms, arrows and ammunition with care.
- Know your safe zone-of-fire and stick to it.
- Control your emotions when using weapons.
- Wear hearing and eye protection.
- Don’t consume alcohol or drugs before or while handling firearms or bows.
- Be aware of circumstances that require added caution or safety awareness.

Careless shooters taking pot shots at electric equipment can cause major problems for your electric company.

Here’s why:

- You are inconveniencing your fellow member-customers whose electricity has been disrupted.
- It could even be a matter of life and death to someone on a life-support system or to someone who is hit by a stray shot.
- Damage to electrical equipment is very expensive to repair. Lines may be cut or weakened from a shot, and they may sag or break, becoming a severe hazard for anyone who comes in contact with the line.
- Broken insulators can cause power outages that are hard—and expensive—to find. An insulator cracked by a bullet can remain on line for a long time before it finally fails.
Think about safety when school buses are rolling and excited children are on their way to and from classes.

Safety comes first:
- Look left, right, then left again before crossing the street.
- Never cross the street against a light, even if there’s no traffic in sight.
- Take directions from crossing guards.
- Cross in front of the bus only after the driver signals it’s OK to do so.
- Find a safe place for your child to wait for the bus, away from traffic and the street.
- Teach your child to stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals that it’s safe to enter.
- When your child is dropped off, make sure he/she knows to exit the bus and walk 10 giant steps away from the bus and to be aware of the street traffic in the area.
- Always wear a bike helmet when biking.
- Walk the bike through intersections.
- Walk with a buddy.
- Wear light-colored or reflective material.

Keep cool and you could save a life—possibly your own.

Heatstroke prevention rules:
- Take frequent cooling-off breaks in the shade or air conditioning.
- Drink plenty of water before starting any outdoor activity, and drink water during the day. Drink less tea, coffee and alcoholic beverages.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored clothes.
- Limit your physical activity during the hottest part of the day.
- Kids, cars and heat make a deadly combination. Never leave a child—or pet—in a vehicle, even for “just a few
minutes.” That’s long enough for a closed vehicle to heat up to dangerous levels, even on a 60-degree day.

- If someone has heatstroke-related symptoms, cool the person rapidly: Remove excess clothing and cool the person with cold, wet sheets or a cool bath. Call a doctor immediately and transport the person to the nearest hospital—this is an emergency.

**AT LARGE**

Because many pieces of farm equipment reach heights of 14 feet or higher, always remember to look up when entering fields and barn lots to make sure there is enough room to pass beneath electric lines. Electric contact accidents can result in loss of limbs or even death.

**Farm safety rules:**

- The number one electrical farm hazard is the potential contact from a grain auger to a power line. Always look up before raising or moving an auger.
- The same is true of metal irrigation pipe, often stored along fence lines under an electric line. Never raise or move irrigation pipe without looking up. A few seconds of caution can mean the difference between life and death.
- Be sure hand tools are in good working order and use them according to manufacturers’ instructions.
- Ensure that the wiring in your workshop is adequate to handle your tools. And never operate any electric tools near water.
- Read labels and handling instructions carefully and follow them when using chemicals and herbicides. Never leave chemicals where children or animals can get into them; store them in a locked cabinet if possible. Safely dispose of containers. Contact the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality at 1-800-CLEAN-UP for disposal information.