



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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ELECTRIC CO-OP**

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FROM THE MANAGER

Save a Life: Avoid Distractions While Driving



Angie Erickson

Some temptations are hard to resist. For me, it can be especially challenging to turn down that last piece of chocolate cake.

While driving, we typically hear

that “ding” on our phone, alerting us to a text or call coming through, and we sometimes feel the urgent need to check it. We know we shouldn’t, but we reason that we’re going to make an exception — just this once.

So, why do we indulge in behavior we know to be wrong, dangerous and in many states, illegal? Call it hubris. According to AAA research, most people feel they are better-than-average drivers. After all, we have busy lives and are accustomed to multitasking. But

mounts of research and thousands of deaths every year prove otherwise.

August is Back to School Safety Month. As a new school year begins with young drivers and school buses back on the road, I thought it would be a good time to remind folks, including myself, of the dangers of distracted driving.

The reality is that using a phone while driving creates enormous potential for injuries and fatalities. Distractions take a motorist’s attention off driving, which can make a driver miss critical events, objects and cues, potentially leading to a crash.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, one of every 10 fatal crashes in the U.S. involves distracted driving, resulting in more than 3,000 deaths annually. I find this statistic heartbreaking considering so many of these accidents could easily

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PLAY IT SAFE. THAT TEXT CAN WAIT.



If it’s an emergency, pull over before answering the phone.

O'Brien and Zwahlen Represent Twin Valley at Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp

AVA O'BRIEN AND KATIE ZWAHLEN attended the 45th annual Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp (CYLC) July 15-21, 2022. The leadership camp was held near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, and hosted 62 student leaders from Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Wyoming. These high schoolers were sponsored by a total of 31 participating electric cooperatives across the four states.

O'Brien and Zwahlen were selected by Twin Valley Electric Cooperative based on the leadership skills, academic achievements, extracurricular activities and character demonstrated in their application, which included testing and interview.

During the camp, Zwahlen and O'Brien learned how an electric cooperative is organized and operated by developing a model-cooperative with their fellow students, empowering the campers to elect a board of directors, appoint a general manager, establish committees and attend daily membership meetings. Camp participants also attended educational seminars on leadership, online reputation management, conflict management, and co-op careers, in addition to presentations

on high voltage electricity, raptors and avian protection with HawkQuest, and a tour of the Yampa Valley Electric community solar array.



Ava O'Brien



Katie Zwahlen

Along with its professional development programs, CYLC included a visit to Mount Werner and downtown Steamboat Springs, whitewater rafting on the Colorado River, and other fun activities such as a volleyball tournament, swimming, talent show and a dance.

"Twin Valley Electric Cooperative is proud to continue our sponsorship of our co-op's student leaders at the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp," said Angie Erickson, CEO. "It is an honor to help provide students opportunities to grow in their leadership potential and develop the knowledge to further engage in our cooperative community."

Twin Valley Electric sponsors the trip of two students each year. For more information on how to attend/send students to camp, contact Marsha Moses at 620-784-5500 or visit our website in December for more information.



Farming season means sharing the road with large farm equipment, which can be wide and slow. Public roads are often the only way to get from point A to point B.

When you find yourself following or meeting large farm equipment on the road, take a deep breath and do the following to keep everyone safe.

- 1** Be alert and cautious, and give farm equipment and other slow-moving vehicles space.
- 2** Do not pass in a "No Passing Zone," or where it is not safe to do so, such as intersections, bridges and railroad crossings, among others.
- 3** Make sure the tractor is not trying to make a left turn before you pass on the left.
- 4** Do not tailgate. Following too closely means you could be in the operator's blind spot.
- 5** Be careful when you do get the chance to pass. Oftentimes, farmers will move their equipment over when it is safe for them to do so.

Save a Life: Avoid Distractions While Driving

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be avoided if we'd simply put down our phones while driving.

Distracted driving is considered any activity that diverts our attention, including texting or talking on the phone, and adjusting the navigation or entertainment system. Texting is by far one of the most dangerous distractions. Sending or reading one text takes your eyes off the road for an average of 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

In addition to refraining from texting while driving, we can help keep the roads safe by moving over for first responders and other emergency vehicles. Additionally, if you see utility crews

conducting work near the roadside, I'd encourage you to move over when possible and give them extra space to perform their work safely.

At Twin Valley Electric safety is foremost in everything we do — for our employees and the members of the communities we serve. We routinely remind our crews of the dangers of distracted driving, and we hope you'll have similar conversations with your teens who may be new to the roadways and are especially susceptible to the lure of technology.

Let's work together to keep everyone safe on the roads. Remember: that text can wait and waiting just might save a life.

Sending a Child to College? Discuss Safety First.

As you are shopping for dorm room supplies, décor, snacks and other back-to-campus items, take a moment to discuss safety tips with your child before hugs and goodbyes.

Here are some safety topics to help keep your college student safe.

Electrical Safety Tips

- ▶ When shopping for items that run on electricity, look for a safety endorsement label, such as UL (Underwriters Laboratories).
- ▶ Do not put a cellphone under a pillow or place it on or under bedding. It could overheat or catch fire.
- ▶ In the dorm or apartment, make sure outlets near water sources are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). If they are not, contact the resident assistant, campus housing staff or landlord. Look for a test and reset button on the face of the outlet.
- ▶ Use power strips with an over-current protector that will shut off power if too much current is drawn.

- ▶ Avoid overloading extension cords, power strips or outlets.
- ▶ Do not hang decorative lights with nails or tacks; always use plastic hooks.
- ▶ Do not run electrical cords across traffic paths or under rugs.

General Safety Tips

- ▶ Find out what type of public safety department is on campus and how it functions; ask which services the department offers and the steps it takes to prevent crime.
- ▶ Locate emergency call buttons or phones across campus in case of an emergency.
- ▶ Walk with a friend, especially at night.
- ▶ When attending events or parties, go with at least one person you know and trust. If your friend leaves, do not stay.
- ▶ Always be aware of your surroundings.
- ▶ Avoid being distracted (listening to music, texting, and so on) while walking on campus.
- ▶ Find out what types of mental health services or counseling the campus offers.

CAMPUS SAFETY TIPS

Every College Student Should Know

Relay these safety tips to your young adults who are campus bound for the first time or returning for another year.

- 1** Do not overload electrical outlets, power strips or extension cords. Use power strips with an overcurrent protector.
- 2** Be aware of your surroundings, especially when listening to music or texting.
- 3** Unplug small appliances when not in use and all appliances when away for extended periods.
- 4** Never walk alone at night.
- 5** Avoid using generic charging cubes or cords. They could overheat, shock or burn you.
- 6** Locate the emergency call buttons or phones across campus in case of an emergency.
- 7** Do not put your cellphone on or under your pillow or bedding. It could overheat or catch fire.



FARM SAFETY FOR A SAFE HARVEST

Take these steps to help keep you and everyone on your farm safe during a busy harvest.

Meet Daily

- ▶ Have morning safety meetings to brief everyone about the day ahead and to discuss potential electrical hazards.
- ▶ Review power line locations, clearance requirements and the proper positioning of extensions for transporting.

Train Others

- ▶ Train anyone working on your farm, including seasonal workers and family members, on potential electrical hazards.

Use a Spotter

- ▶ Use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines or poles.
- ▶ Always keep equipment and extensions at least 20 feet from power lines.
- ▶ If your equipment makes contact with a power line, pole or guy wire, stay in the cab, call 911 and warn others to stay away.



Driving Behind Farm Equipment: Do Your Part

Spring planting and fall harvest are busy times. Farmers and workers have big equipment and implements on the road. Navigating roadways can be dangerous for farm equipment operators and auto drivers who follow behind them.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 410 farmers and farm workers died from work-related injuries in 2019. Transportation incidents, which included overturned tractors, were the leading cause of death for these farmers and farm workers.

Follow these safety tips to make it safer for everyone involved.

Equipment Operators

- ▶ Make sure all flashers and lights are operational.
- ▶ Drive as far to the right side of the road as possible when going around a curve.
- ▶ Pull over and allow vehicles to pass when traffic builds up behind you.
- ▶ Take care at railroad crossings.
- ▶ Avoid traveling during busy traffic times.
- ▶ Be mindful of the height and width of machinery, watching power lines, bridges and other hazards.
- ▶ Along with turn signals, use hand signals.
- ▶ Stay rested; do not drive when you are too tired or hungry.
- ▶ Keep a first-aid kit onboard in case of accidents or emergencies.

Auto Drivers

- ▶ Think about how long it will take to get to your destination and add extra time for busy farm roads.
 - ▶ Give farmers plenty of room on the road. If a piece of equipment takes up the entire road, pull into a driveway or area and wait for them to pass.
 - ▶ When passing, be sure you do so in a passing zone where there is clear visibility around farm equipment. Watch for oncoming vehicles.
 - ▶ Go slow. Farm operators often stop or turn into fields. In addition, cars going at or over the speed limit can catch up to farm machinery quickly, since farmers in equipment move slowly.
 - ▶ Do not assume that a farmer can move over in narrow areas — it is not always possible.
 - ▶ Honk or motion when passing farmers. They may not see you or know you are there as their equipment is big and noisy.
 - ▶ Do not tailgate; the farmer often cannot see you.
 - ▶ Do not pass and then slow suddenly in front of equipment with implements behind it or farm trucks full of grain. They cannot stop quickly.
 - ▶ Farmers make very wide turns. Give them plenty of time and room.
- These are a few tips to make it safer for both the equipment operator and automobile drivers and to provide a more pleasant drive for all.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

An easy way to save energy is to seal air leaks and holes where plumbing pipes run through walls in your home. You can also check wall-mounted cabinets for plumbing holes or air gaps in the back. Fill any holes or gaps with spray foam. Wear protective gloves and use a damp rag for cleanup. **SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV**

