



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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**TWIN VALLEY
ELECTRIC CO-OP**

NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

We're Ready for Storm Season. Are You?

Now that summer is in full swing, like many of you, I welcome more opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy the warmer weather. Summertime brings many of my favorite activities like cooking out with family and friends, afternoons on the water and simply slowing down a bit to enjoy life.

But summer months also make conditions right for dangerous storms. Our region is known for harmful tornadoes and severe storms, often destroying everything in the storm's path. These potential weather events can also cause destruction to our electrical system, but I want you to know that TVEC crews are ready and standing by to respond should power outages occur in our area.

When major storms knock out power, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they get to work on any downed lines. I would encourage you to also practice safety

and preparedness to protect your family during major storms and outages.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends the items below as a starting point for storm and disaster preparedness, but you can visit www.ready.gov for additional resources.

- ▶ Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, such as canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).
- ▶ Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- ▶ Ensure your first-aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.
- ▶ Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- ▶ Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.

In the event of a prolonged power outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from a power surge, and will



Angie Erickson



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STORMS CAN BRING HIDDEN ELECTRICAL DANGERS

OUTSIDE

Severe weather can cause damage to overhead power lines. That damage could be noticeable — a downed line across an open road, for instance. However, it may not be as obvious if it is camouflaged by storm damage.

Whether you see a downed line or you suspect one could be hidden under debris or standing water do not go near the area. Stay away and call 911, and a crew will be dispatched to de-energize the line. Warn others to stay away as well.

Power lines and other electrical equipment do not have to be sparking, arcing (giving off a flame) or on fire to be energized.

AT HOME

Never step into a flooded basement or other standing water. The water could be covering electrical outlets, appliances or cords.

If your home's electrical system has been damaged, waterlogged or otherwise compromised, have it thoroughly inspected by a professional electrician before using any electricity (inside or out).

ALWAYS presume a downed power line is energized, dangerous and deadly.

Suds and Savings

10 ways to save energy in the laundry room

Your clothes washer and dryer account for a significant portion of energy consumption from major appliances, and let's face it — laundry is no one's favorite chore. Make the most of your laundry energy use! There are several easy ways you can save energy (and money) in the laundry room. The Department of Energy recommends the following suggestions for saving on suds:

1 WASH WITH COLD WATER.

Switching from warm water to cold water can cut one load's energy use by more than half, and by using a cold-water detergent, you can still achieve that brilliant clean you'd normally get from washing in warm water.

2 WASH FULL LOADS WHEN POSSIBLE.

Your washing machine will use the same amount of energy no matter the size of the clothes load, so fill it up if you can.

3 USE THE HIGH-SPEED OR EXTENDED SPIN CYCLE IN THE WASHER.

This setting will remove more moisture before drying, reducing your drying time and the extra wear on clothing.

4 DRY HEAVIER COTTONS SEPARATELY.

Loads will dry faster and more evenly if you separate heavier cottons like linens and towels from your lightweight clothing.

5 MAKE USE OF THE "COOL DOWN" CYCLE.

If your dryer has this cycle option, you can save energy because the clothes will finish drying with the remaining heat in the dryer.

6 USE LOWER HEAT SETTINGS TO DRY CLOTHING.

Regardless of drying time, you'll still use less energy.

7 USE DRYER BALLS.

Dryer balls, usually wool or rubber, will help keep clothes separated for faster drying, and they can help reduce static, so you can eliminate dryer sheets.

8 SWITCH LOADS WHILE THE DRYER IS WARM.

This allows you to take advantage of the remaining heat from the previous cycle.

9 CLEAN THE LINT FILTER AFTER EACH DRYING CYCLE.

If you use dryer sheets, remember to scrub the filter once a month with a toothbrush to remove excess buildup.

10 PURCHASE ENERGY STAR®-RATED WASHERS AND DRYERS.

When it's time to purchase a new washer or dryer, look for the ENERGY STAR® label. New washers and dryers that receive the ENERGY STAR® rating use about 20% less energy than conventional models.

To learn about additional ways you can save energy at home, visit the Department of Energy's home efficiency page, www.energy.gov/energysaver.

We're Ready for Storm Season. Are You? *Continued from page 16A* ►

also help prevent overloading the circuits during power restoration. That said, do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored. If you plan to use a small generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.

Listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for storm and emergency information, and check

Twin Valley's website or Facebook page for power restoration updates.

After the storm, avoid downed power lines and walking through flooded areas where power lines could be submerged. Allow ample room for utility crews to safely perform their jobs, including on your property.

Advance planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and can lessen the impact of the storm's effects.

5 Tips for Spring Cleaning

BY FAMILY FEATURES

Spring cleaning isn't just about purging dirt and grime. It's also the perfect opportunity to take inventory of items around your home. As you tackle this season's cleaning, look for ways to improve your overall living space, from getting rid of things you no longer need to adding items that can work harder for you.

Consider these five ways to tackle your home inside and out this spring.

MAKE ORGANIZING EASIER. As you clean each space, look for easy ways to reduce unsightly messes and improve organization. If your entryway always becomes a jumbled pile of shoes and coats, consider adding a storage bench and hooks to bring order to the area. If the kids' toys always accumulate in the living room, add a storage chest or large baskets to store them when not in use. If tools and equipment make the garage unusable, install shelving units to keep everything in place.

ELIMINATE THE EXCESS. Spring cleaning is also an opportunity to declutter and make way for something new, either by donating or selling unused things. Whether it's last season's fashion and accessories or unused tech and fitness gear, that item you never used — or haven't used in a while — may be exactly what someone else is looking for. Online platforms can make the process easy and be a way to earn extra cash or help fund other home upgrades. Look for marketplaces that help you maximize your return; eBay, for example, is giving sellers 200 free listings every month, meaning you only pay after your items sell.

REIMAGINE YOUR LIVING SPACE. If one area is becoming too crowded or doesn't serve your family's needs, consider items you can repurpose for another part of the home. For example, move an unused chair in your living room into a bedroom to create a reading nook. Keep your focus on function as you make changes that accommodate your lifestyle.

COMMIT TO REVISITING REGULARLY. It's easy to let clutter and disorganization slide when you get busy with life's demands. Once your spring cleaning and reorganizing is complete, commit to reassessing your home monthly or quarterly so you can make small adjustments along the way, rather than face a major project every year.

MAKE SMART ADDITIONS. Once you've cleared your space, and sold things you no longer need, you can convert that extra cash into reliable home appliances and tech. For example, purchase or

upgrade items like vacuums, lawn mowers, power washers, drills and more to help take your spring cleaning to the next level. You can make your money go further by choosing certified refurbished products; some marketplaces like eBay offer inventory that has been professionally inspected by the manufacturer, or a manufacturer-approved vendor, to look, feel and work like new.

Shop Smarter

Considering refurbished products for your shopping list can expand your options and make it easier to purchase top-of-the-line brands without going over budget. From tech and small kitchen appliances to outdoor power equipment, you can discover a breadth of items often in like-new condition.

SHOP FOR MULTI-PURPOSE ITEMS: When upgrading your arsenal of gadgets, tools and small appliances, look for items that can serve multiple purposes. For example, many vacuums can transform into steamers or include mop attachments, and some pressure cookers can also be used as air fryers.

FEEL CONFIDENT IN YOUR PURCHASE: Sometimes upgrading means investing in a premium product you can count on to last longer than entry-level models. With eBay's Certified Refurbished program, you can find popular, professionally inspected name brands at up to 50% off, all of which are backed by industry-leading two-year warranties for peace of mind.

KEEP SUSTAINABILITY IN MIND: Keeping functionality in mind, and buying like-new items not only saves you money now and in the future but can also help protect the planet by extending the life of products and reducing unnecessary waste.



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What Color Mulch do Tomatoes Prefer?

BY K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

Colored mulches can help increase the production of some garden crops

You may not think of tomatoes as a fickle fruit, but Kansas State University horticulture expert Ward Upham says that the popular garden crop can, indeed, be picky.

Upham noted that colored plastic mulches have gained favor over the more traditional black plastic mulch because they seem to increase the production of marketable fruit. Plastic mulches have long been known to promote earlier fruiting, increased yields and weed control.

“With tomatoes, the color of choice has been red (mulch),” Upham said.

When the season’s weather is “perfect” for growing tomatoes, Upham said there may be no difference in production when using various plastic mulches. But when growing conditions are less than favorable, gardeners may experience up to a 20% increase in their tomato crop when using red mulch — though, on average, the increase is more like 12%.

For best results, Upham suggests home gardeners lay a drip irrigation line near the center of where the mulch will lay, because “the plastic will prevent rainwater or overhead irrigation from reaching the plants.”

Additional steps include:

- ▶ Use a hoe to construct trenches for the outer 6 inches of the plastic mulch. “This allows the center of the bed to be undisturbed, with the edges of the mulch draping down into the trench,” Upham said.
- ▶ Fill the trenches to cover the edges of the mulch. “This will prevent wind from catching and blowing the mulch,” according to Upham.

Fertilizing Cole Crops

In a recent Horticulture Newsletter from K-State Research and Extension, Upham also shared tips for fertilizing such cole crops as cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower.

If those crops made it through recent cold snaps, they will need a fertilizer boost, he said. “These plants need to mature before summer heat arrives, so they must grow quickly while the weather is cool,” Upham said. “A side dressing of



Plastic mulches have gained favor over the traditional black plastic mulch because they seem to increase the production of marketable fruit. With tomatoes, the mulch color of choice is red.

fertilizer about three weeks after transplanting helps these plants grow rapidly.”

Upham suggests using fertilizers high in nitrogen, such as nitrate of soda or blood meal at the rate of one-third cup per 10 feet of row. Fertilizer must be watered in, unless timely rains do the job for you.

Sharpening Your Mower’s Blade

Upham also has advice for kicking off lawn-mowing season.

“Remember that a dull lawn mower blade gives the lawn a whitish cast,” he said. “A dull blade does not cut cleanly but rather shreds the ends of the leaf blades. The shredded ends dry out, giving the lawn that whitish look.”

He added that a sharp blade is even more important when turf starts putting up seeds. “The seed head stems are much tougher than the grass blades and more likely to shred,” he said.

Under normal use, mower blades should be sharpened every 10 hours of use.

Upham and his colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes. The newsletter is available to view online at <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html> or can be delivered by email each week.