



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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**TWIN VALLEY
ELECTRIC CO-OP**

NEWS

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Unplug With Meaningful Community Programs



Angie Erickson

Most adults vaguely remember that “checking for messages” meant listening to an answering machine. We carried on with our days without relying on cell phones

and managed just fine. But today, we are more connected than ever through our smartphones and other devices.

Our phones are so much more now — from cameras to calendars to social media connections — and truly disconnecting from them can be tough. But it's even harder for our kids to unplug because they only know life with these tiny screens. It's difficult for them to imagine life without computers, gaming devices, tablets or cell phones.

But there's great value in unplugging for children and adults, even if it's for just a short period of time. For kids, time away from the screen

to be outside with other children allows them to connect with nature and others in a way that a virtual experience simply does not allow. They are able to experience life in the moment and allow their creativity and energy to break free.

Fortunately, we have access to great community programs and organizations like 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc. that provide children with a safe place to learn and grow, while cultivating new skills and interests.

These types of clubs and programs offer kids an opportunity to explore activities and interests outside of school academics. Children can investigate areas they might not otherwise have access to and discover new interests and passions. They often learn new skills and strengthen existing ones. It's no secret that the broader the range of experiences and activities children are exposed to, the more likely they are to find their own path and possibly career. Community

Continued on page 16B ►

ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

Energy used for cooling and heating your home makes up the largest portion of your monthly energy bills. By combining regular equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings, you can save about 30% on your energy bills while helping our environment. **SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV**



Tips for a Safe Harvest

Agriculture is the backbone of our country, and our livelihood greatly depends on the crops provided by American farmers. In addition to being one of the most labor-intensive professions, farming is also considered one of the most dangerous jobs in the U.S.

The hard work and exhaustive labor are tough but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous — even deadly — when farming near electrical equipment.

Every year, we see tractors and other farming equipment accidentally collide with utility poles and power lines, causing injuries and power outages. These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and around your surroundings when operating large farm machinery. If you're preparing for harvest season, please keep the following safety tips in mind:

- ▶ Maintain a 10-foot clearance around all utility equipment in all directions.
- ▶ Use a spotter and deploy flags to maintain safe distances from power lines and other electrical equipment when working in the field.
- ▶ If your equipment makes contact with an energized or downed power line, call 911 immediately and remain inside the vehicle until the power line is de-energized. In case of smoke or fire, exit the cab by making a solid jump out of the cab (without touching it), and hop away to safety.
- ▶ Consider equipment and cargo extensions of your vehicle. Lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipes and even bulk materials can conduct electricity, so keep them out of contact with electrical equipment.

Sept. 19-25 is National Farm Health and Safety Week but practicing safety on the farm year-round yields positive results. We hope you never find yourself in a situation where farming equipment contacts power lines or poles, but if you do, follow the safety tips above.

SEPTEMBER 13-17

High-Voltage SAFETY Demonstration

MONDAY-FRIDAY 9 A.M. TO 1 P.M. | KANSAS STATE FAIR

Brought to you by the electric cooperatives of Kansas. 

Kansas electric cooperatives and Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Kansas invite you to join them for a high-voltage safety demo as a part of Kansas' Largest Classroom from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Sept. 13-17 in the Ad Astra Pavilion.

Unplug With Meaningful Community Programs *Continued from page 16A ▶*

programs also foster important leadership development and public speaking skills. Through guided and informal play and activities, children learn problem-solving and interpersonal skills that enable them to resolve conflicts peacefully and improve interpersonal relationships.

Adults can also find meaningful opportunities to spend time with the kids when we all unplug. From board games to craft projects to playing in the park, there are many ways we can unplug for some family fun.

While you and your children are disconnecting, take a moment to identify potential energy savings. Unplug electronics that are not in use to avoid “vampire” energy loss. This is the energy that is drained from

technology and electronics even when they are not in use. For example, although it is turned off, your TV is waiting to receive a signal from the remote and your DVR is waiting to record the next show or perform an update. When you're unplugging from your electronics, try unplugging them from your home to achieve those energy savings.

Let's encourage youngsters to step away from the screens and join in. To play and be part of an organization that helps them connect with others and find meaningful interactions and explore new activities and interests.

When you do plug back in, Twin Valley Electric will be here to provide safe, reliable service for your membership.

Working Together to Combat Cyber Attacks

Computer hacking is a top news story these days, and for years electric co-ops have focused on blocking cyber threats from interfering with the nationwide electric grid of wires and poles that keeps our lights on.

You can also help defend against that electronic mischief. And you should. Because when you use internet-connected devices like your smart phone, you're instantly connected to the grid.

The network of power lines, transformers and substations adds up to an incredibly complex system that reliably brings us conveniences of modern life. That network is transforming into a "smart grid" that does an even better job of delivering electricity. It's adding renewable energy sources like solar and wind power, which calls for sophisticated software to figure out how to keep power flowing at night or when the wind isn't blowing. Computer algorithms make plans for the most efficient and reliable operations when forecasts call for storms, wildfires or times of high-power use.

Making such modern miracles happen means joining with another dominant part of today's world — the internet.

The blink-of-an-eye speed of balancing the generation of electricity with your flip of a light switch relies heavily on the electronically connected world. The internet is incredibly useful but

also a target of troublemakers, from lone, self-taught experts to international crime rings.

Electric utilities know this and work every day through their own offices and national organizations on cyber safety.

You can take smart steps too, to protect yourself, and the electric grid. Because the power grid uses the internet, that means that any of your internet-connected devices are also part of the grid: computers, security cameras, printers, smart TVs, health monitors — even cars and light bulbs can be connected to the internet.

Here are the top tips experts advise to defend against hackers:

► **LOCK THE FRONT DOOR.** If you have wireless internet in your home, the traffic comes in through the router. If you take just one step, create a strong password for that router, and set a reminder to change the password regularly.

► **USE A SECRET CODE.** Weak passwords make things easier for hackers. A study found the most-used password in 2021 was, you guessed it, "123456." A more secure option uses combinations of upper-case and lower-case letters, combined with numbers and special symbols like "&" or "!" There are apps to help you remember passwords. A simple old-fashioned notebook can also

work, as long as you're certain you'll never lose it and no one else has access to it. And be aware that every major internet-connected appliance comes with its own factory-installed password you should change right away. The password for my smart TV was, you guessed it, 123456.

► **STAY VIGILANT.** If you receive an email with an attachment you weren't expecting, don't open the attachment. If you get a message with a link you didn't know was coming, don't click it. Even if it's from a friend, phone them and ask if they sent it — hackers can send messages using your friend's address.

► **STAY STATE-OF-THE-ART.** Your computer and other devices will regularly offer updates — install them. They often contain security updates to protect against the latest cyber threats. And they will come to you directly through your computer, phone or printer — don't be fooled by an email or message saying it's an update. You can also go online and ask about any updates to your device.

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, and the Department of Homeland Security has titled this year's theme, "If you connect it, protect it." That's good advice for your home — and for the electric grid.

Safety Demonstrations Available

Did you know? Twin Valley offers electrical safety demonstrations to organizations in our community.

Because providing safe electricity to our members is our primary purpose, we believe strongly in the importance of educating our membership and our community on how to live and work safely around high voltage power lines. While we often present to youth, it's usually adults who find themselves in an accident involving power lines. In our area, individuals operating agricultural or construction equipment are the most at-risk for serious injury from unintentional electric contact.

If you think your club, organization, or event would benefit from a free electrical safety demonstration, contact our office at 866-784-5500



FARM SAFETY COLORING SHEET

Farm Health and Safety Week is Sept. 19-25!

Whether you live on a farm or in the city, always remember to avoid playing near power lines and other electrical equipment.

