

# NEWS



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## Manager's Message: Safety Starts with You

**E**lectricity plays many roles in our lives, from powering baby monitors, cell phones and lighting, to running HVAC systems and appliances. No wonder we get so comfortable with its instant availability that when we flip a switch, we expect most systems or devices to do the job.

May is National Electrical Safety Month, and here at Tri-County EMC, we think it's a great time to look around your home and check for potential safety hazards.



Remember, every electrical device has a purpose and a service lifespan. While we can extend their operations with maintenance and care, none of them are designed to last or work forever. When electricity is involved, failures can present electrical hazards that might be avoided with periodic inspections.

### Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters

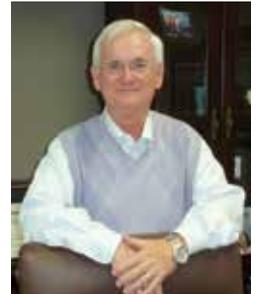
Outdoor outlets or those in potentially damp locations in a kitchen, bathroom or laundry room often include GFCI features. They are designed to sense abnormal current flows, breaking the circuit to prevent potential electric shocks from devices plugged into the outlets.

The average GFCI outlet is designed to last about 10 years, but in areas prone to electrical storms or power surges, they can wear out in five years or less. Check them frequently by pressing the red test button. Make sure you hit the black reset button when you are done. Contact a licensed electrician to replace any failing GFCI outlets.

### Loose or Damaged Outlets or Switches

Unstable electrical outlets or wall switches with signs of heat damage or discoloration can offer early warnings of potential shock or electrical fire hazards. Loose connections can allow electrical current arcing. If you see these warning signs, it may be time to contact an electrician.

**J. Michael Davis**  
General Manager



### Surge Protectors

Power strips with surge protectors can help safeguard expensive equipment like televisions, home entertainment systems and computer components from power spikes. Voltage spikes are measured in joules, and surge protectors are rated for the number of joules they can effectively absorb. That means if your surge protector is rated at 1,000 joules, it should be replaced when it hits or passes that limit. When the limit is reached, protection stops, and you're left with a basic power strip.

Some surge protectors include indicator lights that flicker to warn you when they've stopped working as designed, but many do not. If your electrical system takes a major hit, or if you don't remember when you bought your surge protector, replacement may be the best option.

### Extension Cords

If you use extension cords regularly to connect devices and equipment to your wall outlets, you may live in an underwired home. With a growing number of electrical devices connecting your family to the electricity you get from Tri-County EMC, having enough outlets in just the right spots can be challenging. Remember, extension cords are designed for temporary, occasional or periodic use.

If an extension cord gets noticeably warm when in use, it could be undersized for the intended use. If it shows any signs of frayed, cracked or heat-damaged insulation, it should be replaced. If the grounding prong is missing, crimped or loose, a grounded cord will not provide the protection designed into its performance. And always make sure that extension cords used in outdoor or potentially damp locations are rated for exterior use.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, approximately 51,000 electrical fires are reported each year in the United States, causing more than \$1.3 billion in annual property damage.

Electricity is an essential necessity for modern living, and Tri-County EMC is committed to providing safe, reliable and affordable power to all of our members. We hope you'll keep these electrical safety tips in mind so that you can note any potential hazards before damage occurs.



General Manager Mike Davis and several board members met with NC State Representative Chris Humphrey and other state legislators during the Rally in Raleigh on March 19-20, 2019, to discuss issues important to electric co-ops, their members and their communities.



## Prepare Now for 2019 Hurricane Season

May 5-11 is Hurricane Preparedness Week, and Tri-County EMC encourages all its members to be proactive and prepare now for storms and severe weather.

North Carolina is one of the leading states for overall damage from hurricanes, and any part of our state can be impacted by these storms, not just the coast. Many individuals and communities in North Carolina are still recovering from the devastating effects of past storms including Florence, Michael and Matthew.

Before the Atlantic hurricane season begins on June 1, take time to recognize the importance of hurricane planning and take steps to get ready. Here are some simple things you can do now to prepare:

- ➔ Outline a communications and evacuation plan for your family. If you have pets or any livestock, include them in your plan.
- ➔ Create an emergency kit including:
  - Important documents sealed in a watertight plastic bag
  - Cash
  - Enough non-perishable food, water and medication for at least three days
  - First-aid kit

- Battery-powered radio
- Flashlight
- Extra batteries
- Personal hygiene items
- Extra clothes and blankets
- Food and other supplies for pets
- ➔ Connect with us online at [tcemc.com](http://tcemc.com) or on Facebook or Twitter, to stay informed about weather, outages and other information. Keep our outage reporting number and email handy: 919-735-2611 and [customerservice@tcemc.com](mailto:customerservice@tcemc.com). You can also visit our outage map at [outage.tcemc.com](http://outage.tcemc.com).
- ➔ Sign up for text message outage alerts by contacting our member services representatives at 919-735-2611,
- ➔ Sign up for local weather alerts and warnings. You can also visit [ReadyNC.org](http://ReadyNC.org) or download the free ReadyNC app for tips for preparing for natural disasters, as well as real-time weather and traffic information.

### Dial 811 Before You Dig

Whether you are installing a mailbox, building a deck or planting a tree or garden, those projects should start with a call to the one-call 811 center. The free, national 811 number connects you to a local one-call center. The center will then alert the appropriate underground facility owners so they can dispatch locators to mark the approximate location of their lines with paint or flags. Unintentionally striking a line can result in inconvenient outages for entire neighborhoods, harm to yourself or your neighbors, and repair costs.



Call at least two business days before digging to give enough time for utility lines to be properly marked.



## Mike Buegeler Retires after 22 Years of Service

**S**taking Engineer Mike Buegeler retired on March 29, 2019, after a 22-year cooperative career with Tri-County EMC. A retirement dinner held to celebrate Buegeler's time at TCCEMC was filled with laughter and stories of the impact he had on the lives of others.

"It is important to enjoy the people that you work with and I can say that several of my co-workers have become like family to me," Buegeler said. "I'm going to miss them."

When asked what Mike has planned after retirement, he said that he is looking forward to moving back home to Texas to be closer to family. "I'm trading in my work boots for cowboy boots."

"We greatly appreciate Mike's dedication to his duties and commitment to our members; we recognize and honor him for 22 years of service on their behalf," said Mike Davis, general manager of Tri-County EMC. "While he will be missed, we wish him the very best with the next chapter of his life."

Tri-County EMC wishes Mike a happy retirement and thanks him for the many years of service to the cooperative and its members!

## Design our Bag Challenge opens on May 1 for submissions!

### CONTEST CRITERIA

- Open to students grades Pre-K-12.
- Students must live or attend a school in Tri-County EMC service area.
- Theme of design should be related to Tri-County EMC and must be your own original, unpublished work.
- Designs with the most likes at 12:00PM on June 14 will be chosen as the winner.
- Include your name, parents name, age, grade, school, address and phone number with your submission.

### CONTEST TIMELINE

- May 1: Contest opens for submissions.
- June 3: Submission deadline. After the closing date for submissions, on June 3 at 5 p.m., ten (10) finalists will be selected for the contest.
- June 10: If your design is selected as a finalist, it will be posted on Tri-County EMC's Facebook page members/community will vote for the winning designs.
- June 14: Deadline for voting on Facebook at 12:00PM.

### Mail Artwork to:

Tri-County EMC Design Bag Challenge  
Tri-County EMC  
PO BOX 130  
Dudley, NC 28333

### Questions?

Contact Deidra Locklear, manager of Marketing and Communications, at 919-735-2611 ext. 621 or [Deidra.locklear@tcemc.com](mailto:Deidra.locklear@tcemc.com).

## Teresa Eason Brings Learning to Life With Bright Ideas Grants

For the past 25 years, Tri-County EMC has partnered with local teachers by providing grants that fund the resources they need to customize hands-on learning projects and bring out the best in their students.

We have had the great honor of working with more than 1,600 outstanding local educators through the Bright Ideas Education Grant Program, an initiative shared and implemented by all 26 of North Carolina's electric cooperatives.

As Tri-County EMC celebrates the 25th anniversary of Bright Ideas grants in 2019, we recognize one local educator whose dedication and creativity exemplifies the impact of this program: Teresa Eason of North Lenoir High School.

Eason was a 2018 Bright Ideas grant recipient for her project, "A Journey through Alzheimers," where students participated in sensory activities that

stimulated physical, emotional and sensory deficits to Alzheimer's patient's lives.

"These sensory activities allow students to experience many of the physical and mental challenges and frustrations Alzheimer patients face daily," said Eason. "This will help students empathize with patients and provide better emotional care."

Thank you to Mrs. Eason and all of the exceptional educators who have partnered with Tri-County EMC through the Bright Ideas grant program over the past 25 years. We commend your dedication, creativity and commitment to our students and communities!

# May is National Electrical Safety Month

This month, make electrical safety a priority. Help your family avoid dangerous situations by taking a few easy precautions:

- ➔ Make sure to turn off AND unplug. Appliances, tools and other devices are still connected to electricity when they are plugged in. Turn off, then unplug all portable electric devices when you're finished using them. When unplugging, make sure to hold the plug, not the cord. Also, never touch electrical appliances with wet hands or use them near sinks, tubs, toilets or showers.
- ➔ Be smart about outlets. Don't overload power outlets, power strips or surge protectors, and use bulbs that match the wattage indicated on light fixtures. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets should be used in any area where water and electricity may come into contact, including kitchens, bathrooms, garages and outdoors, and should be tested monthly to ensure they are working properly.
- ➔ Use cords properly. Extension cords should only be used temporarily. Inspect electrical cords often for broken connectors or

fraying. Throw away worn cords to eliminate the possibility of shock, short circuit or fire. Don't attempt to repair damaged cords with tape.

- ➔ Keep a safe distance. Never go near a power line. If you encounter a downed line, leave the area immediately and notify your cooperative, and avoid driving over downed lines. Never place ladders, poles or other items near power lines, and don't fly kites or drones near lines or substations. Teach children not to put their fingers in electrical outlets, use child-proof outlet covers and keep appliances and cords away from children.

Tri-County EMC is dedicated to educating people of all ages about electrical safety, and to providing you with electricity that is as safe and reliable as possible.

For more safety tips and information, visit [tcemc.com](http://tcemc.com), or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

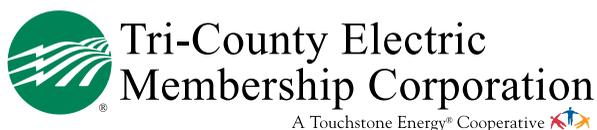


Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets should be used in any area where water and electricity may come into contact



## Tri-County EMC Employees: Ready To Serve

Ralph Kelly is one of 46 employees ready to serve you. Ralph has worked with Tri-County since February 5, 2008, as a Lineman. Ralph resides in Mount Olive with his wife, Jaime and two sons.



Tri-County EMC Membership Corporation in Dudley, N.C., was chartered May 8, 1940.

**We are here to serve you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.**

**For Outages or Emergencies:**  
919-735-2611 or  
1-800-548-4869

[tcemc.com](http://tcemc.com)

### Mission Statement:

Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation is a member-driven cooperative committed to providing reliable electric power at a reasonable cost, to offering superior service, and to taking an active role in supporting the communities it serves.

J. Michael Davis  
*General Manager*

**Management Staff**  
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*Manager, Finance & Administration*

Robert B. Kornegay  
*Manager, Member Services*

Deidra Locklear,  
*Editor*  
*Manager, Marketing and Communications*

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*Manager, Engineering*

Michael Wood  
*Manager, Operations*

Tamah Hughes  
*Manager, Information Technology*

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