

April 2016

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# Hot Watts

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Energy Efficiency

### Tip of the Month

Earth Day is April 22. Give back to the environment by planting a deciduous tree near your home. Deciduous trees lose their leaves during the fall, allowing sunlight to warm your home. The extra shade during summer months will keep your home cooler and give your AC a much needed break.

## Round Up Update



The Cookson Hills Electric Foundation Board of Directors recently met on March 1, 2016, with one goal in mind: to provide charitable assistance for the betterment of the area. At the meeting, the board awarded grants to assist Central High Fire Association and Nicut Rural Volunteer Fire Association. The Foundation also approved grants for Catholic Charities and Warner Schools Backpack Program.

The next meeting will be held on June 7, 2016, with applications due by May 6, 2016. For more information about Operation Round Up or to obtain an application, visit CHEC's website at [www.cooksonhills.com](http://www.cooksonhills.com) or call 800-328-2368.



### The Cookson Hills Electric Foundation Board

Left to Right Bottom Row: Traci Highfill, President Margaret Johnson, and Karen Henderson.  
Top Row: Secretary Philip Henson, Frank Cullum, Vice President Gary Winton, and Dennis Frisbie.



Congratulations!

**Carig Eubanks**  
is our online  
survey winner.



## Youth Tour Winners Announced!

The 2016 Youth Tour essay contest finalists have been announced, and they are as follows: Graylen Fletcher of Vian High School, Kenzie Taylor of Muldrow High School, Emmy Cloud of Muldrow High School, and Krystan Epperson of Central High School. A complete story will follow in the May issue of the Hot Watts.

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If You Find Your Account Number  
Hidden in This Issue of the *Hot Watts*,  
You'll Receive a \$25 Credit on  
Your Electric Bill

# How to start saving energy and money

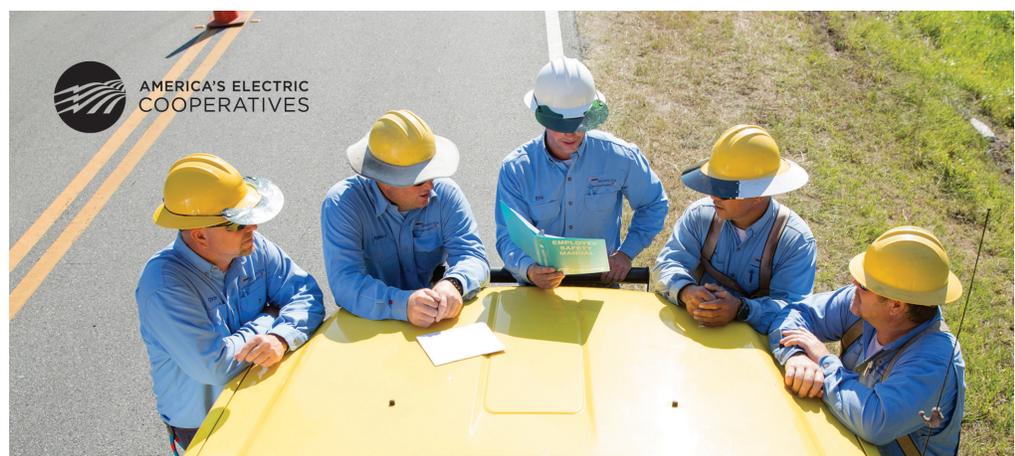
## Three quick tips toward energy efficiency

By Paul Wesslund

If you want to celebrate Earth Day on April 22, start by making your home more energy efficient. Below are three efficiency tips from energy expert Brian Sloboda of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

- 1. Look around your home for no-cost ways to be efficient.** Close the curtains in the summer and open them in the winter. Turn off your computers overnight. Also turn off video game consoles when they're not being used. Better yet, keep them off and send the kids outside to play baseball.
- 2. Look for small steps you can take and DIY.** Caulk around drafty windows. Check the attic for the correct amount of insulation. Switch to LED light bulbs. Plant a deciduous tree on the sunny side of your house; in a few years the leaves will cool your home against the sun in summer, then fall off to warm it in the winter. Old cable TV boxes use a lot of energy. If yours is not ENERGY STAR-rated, call your cable provider and ask for a new one. If you have a major appliance – like a refrigerator, washing machine or dryer – that's more than 10 years old, don't repair it. The energy 828501 efficiency of a newer model will likely pay for itself with energy savings in a few years. Before buying any appliance, look for the ENERGY STAR label, and learn to read it and compare products.
- 3. Call CHEC about energy-saving programs—**A CHEC representative may be able to offer advice or assist with appliance rebates. You might be surprised to find out what's really driving up your energy costs.

*Paul Wesslund writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.*



**"We plan together. We stay safe together."**

**APRIL 11 is NATIONAL  
LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY.**

**#thankalinenman**

# Plan Ahead to Dig Safely

Before picking up your shovel for your next outdoor digging project, take the necessary steps for safety or you just might dig up trouble or even tragedy. Although your projects may seem small, the impact of making contact with an underground utility line could be huge. Damaging underground utilities can be costly, dangerous, and disruptive. To help you stay safe and prevent digging accidents, Safe Electricity shares tips on how to dig safely.

The Common Ground Alliance (CGA) estimates that there are 200 million miles, or 100 billion feet, of underground utilities in the United States. Some of these utilities are buried just a few inches below the ground. This means that small projects, such as planting a flower bed or installing a mailbox, should be surveyed before digging begins.

“The key to safe digging is planning ahead,” explains Molly Hall, executive director of the Energy Education Council’s Safe Electricity program.

Call 811 a few business days before your planned digging date. Once you have reported where you plan to dig and what type of work you will complete, the area will be surveyed and marked for public utilities within two to three days. This service is free of charge.

If you have any private utilities, you will need to hire a private utility locator. Some examples of private utilities include: underground sprinkler system, invisible fences, data communication systems, private water systems, or gas piping to a garage.

If you do not know what facilities are on the property, look for clues to tell you what might be under ground, like: a propane storage tank, gas meters, a detached garage or outbuilding with lights, a grill or pool on the property, manhole lids, storm drains, and pavement patches.

Once all marks have been made to indicate the location of underground utilities in the area, respect the boundaries, and dig carefully. Keep at least 24 inches away from the utility line markings. It can be helpful to excavate by hand when more control is needed to maintain this safe distance.



Before starting your digging, Safe Electricity recommends you keep these additional tips in mind:

- If an area has previously been tested, have it retested. Erosion and natural processes can lead to shifting in the lines.
- If you hit a line in the process of digging, report it, even if it appears to be undamaged. Small dents and microscopic damage can lead to major utility problems.
- Always wear gloves and other protective equipment while digging. Keep a first aid kit on hand.

Stop work immediately if contact is made with an underground line. Your first priority should be evacuating the area for safety. Call 911 to notify emergency personnel and the affected utility. Even small nicks in underground lines can be expensive, but necessary, to fix.

If you believe it may be an electrical line that was damaged, warn those nearby that the ground and any nearby equipment may be energized. Individuals should take precautions to prevent from becoming electricity’s path to ground by remaining still with both feet together. If the area must be evacuated, keep your feet together and hop to safety as you leave the area. Do not resume work until the area has been confirmed safe by your electric utility.

“If a cable has been damaged, never allow anyone near it. Always treat each cable as though it is live,” advises Hall. “Never remove anything from the ground that is in contact with the cable, as it may carry the charge.”

For more information about digging safety, visit [Call811.com](http://Call811.com) and [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).



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# Prepare or Beware

Benjamin Franklin once said that, “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” When it comes to severe weather, this saying can certainly ring true. Whether it is thunder and lightning, high winds, tornadoes, hail, or flooding—making plans now can save lives later.

You can begin your preparation by assembling necessary supplies for a potential power outage. Your emergency preparedness kit should include items such as water, food, flashlight, batteries, blankets, and a first aid kit. A full list of suggested items can be found at [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

The National Weather Service recommends that you:

- Know the county you are located in and nearby towns and cities. Warnings are issued by county and reference major cities.
- Know the difference between a severe thunderstorm watch and warning. A watch means there is the possibility of storms, and a warning means a storm has been reported and you should take cover.
- Check the forecast and the hazardous weather outlook.
- Watch for signs of an approaching storm.
- Turn on a weather radio or an AM/FM radio for information if a storm is approaching.
- Stay inside if you know a storm is headed your way.

Make sure to plan ahead so you do not get caught outside in a storm. If you are inside when a storm hits, stay inside. Keep away from windows and go to the lowest level of your home. If you do get caught outdoors during a storm and are unable to take shelter in a building, try to take shelter in an enclosed vehicle with a hard-top roof—not an open-frame vehicle like a convertible.

Just because a storm has passed does not mean the danger is over. A variety of hazards are left behind. Never touch downed power lines or objects that could be in contact with those lines. Just because power lines are damaged doesn't mean that they are dead. Touching a downed line or anything it has fallen on, like a fence or a tree limb, could get you injured or even killed. Stay away, and instruct others to do the same. If you come across downed power lines, call 911 and your utility immediately.

Learn more at [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).



## Watt's Cooking?

### Cajun Chicken & Rice

- 1 cup uncooked rice
- 2 cups water or chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- Cajun or Creole Seasoning
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 cups diced onions and bell peppers
- 1 (10 oz) can Ro-Tel Diced Tomatoes and Green Chiles
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese



1. Combine rice, water (or broth) and salt in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, then cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 14 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside when done. Keep covered.
2. Cut the chicken into bite-sized pieces, about 1-inch cubes. Season generously with Cajun seasoning. Add one tablespoon of the olive oil to a large pot or dutch oven over medium-high heat. When the oil is very hot, add the chicken in a single layer. Brown on one side, about 2-3 minutes, then flip and brown on the other side. Remove chicken to a plate and set aside.
3. Add the remaining olive oil to the pan, increase heat to high, and when the oil is hot, carefully add the onion and bell peppers. Add more seasoning and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are soft and browned.
4. Add the Tomatoes to the onions and bell peppers, then add the chicken back in, along with any juices that may have collected on the plate. Add the cooked rice and stir until well combined. Add the cheese if desired and stir well to combine.

[www.kevinandamanda.com](http://www.kevinandamanda.com)