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The Voice of New Mexico's Rural Electric Cooperatives



The Sky is Calling Socorro's M Mountain Fly-In



Farmers' Electric Cooperative • September 2017

Harvest Workers Urged to Take Time To Reap Safe Harvest



It can be an exciting and exhausting time, the culmination of a season of hard work. However, the rush to harvest can also yield tragic outcomes. Each year, dozens of farm workers are killed and hundreds are injured in accidents involving power lines and electrical equipment.

“Things people see every day can fade from view and in the busy-ness of harvest time, it’s easy for farm workers to forget about the power lines overhead,” says Richard McCracken of the Safe Electricity Advisory Board. “But failure to notice them can be a deadly oversight.”

Review with all workers the farm activities that take place around power lines. Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance. Keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines—above, below and to the side—a 360-degree rule.

“Always lower grain augers before moving them, even if it’s only a few feet,” says Bob Aherin, PhD, CSP & University of Illinois Professor and Agricultural Safety & Health Program Leader. “Variables like wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can combine to create an unexpected result. Also use extreme caution when raising the bed of a grain truck.”

Farm workers should take these steps to ensure a safer harvest season:

- Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines. Do not let the spotter touch the

machinery while it is being moved anywhere near power lines.

- As with any outdoor work, be careful not to raise any equipment such as ladders, poles, or rods into power lines. Remember, non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.
- Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path!
- Don’t use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside bins. Know where and how to shut off the power in an emergency.
- Use qualified electricians for work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

Operators of farm equipment or vehicles must also know what to do if the vehicle comes in contact with a power line: Stay on the equipment, warn others to stay away and call 911. Do not get off the equipment until the utility crew says it is safe to do so.

“If the power line is energized and you step outside, touching the vehicle and ground, your body becomes the path and electrocution is the result,” Aherin said. “Even if a power line has landed on the ground, the potential for the area nearby to be energized still exists. Stay inside the vehicle unless there’s fire or imminent risk of fire.”

If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together, without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or even touch the equipment. Some electrocutions have occurred after the operator dismounts and, realizing nothing has happened, tries to get back on the equipment.

It is very important that all farm workers and seasonal employees are informed of electrical hazards and trained in proper procedures to avoid injury.

For more information on farm electrical safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org (Spanish versions of this information are also available on the website).

Avoid Electrical Hazards with Your Devices

You need to be careful with any product that has a power cord. Once phones, laptops, and other devices are plugged into an outlet it becomes a potential hazard. As long as they are unplugged they do not have enough power to kill you.

Devices that are meant to be in the bathroom, such as a hair dryer or electric razor, are equipped with safety mechanisms, which shuts off power to the device when it gets wet. Phones, laptops, and wireless speakers are not equipped with this safety mechanism.

Here are some ways to protect you from Electrical Hazards:

- **Respect your phone:** Your devices can be dangerous, so be mindful of those threats. Think twice before going into the bathroom with any device that’s plugged in.
- **Use the right charger:** Stick to chargers approved by the manufacturer. Make sure they have a UL mark signifying that they have been put through a UL certification process.
- **Test your ground-fault outlets:** Push the “test” button, and it should make a quiet popping sound. Anything that is plugged into the outlet should go dead. Push the reset button for the outlet to come back on.
- **Don’t depend on extension cords:** Extension cords are not meant for long-term use. Do not use an extension cord anywhere that it might get wet.
- **Seat your plugs securely:** Outlets do wear out, so if they’re sagging instead of holding your plug securely, it’s time to replace them.



Happy Labor Day

Farmers' Electric Cooperative will be closed Monday, September 4, for Labor Day. Crews will be on standby in case of outages. Should you experience an outage, please contact us at 800-445-8541 at any time.

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Board Meeting

The board of trustees meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at 9:00 a.m. in the Clovis cooperative boardroom.



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Office Hours
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