Plugged in to Altamaha EMC

MAY 2019

The Official Newsletter of Altamaha Electric Membership Corporation

Serving: Toombs, Montgomery, Emanuel, Treutlen, Laurens, Johnson and Tattnall

Frustrated With Your Broadband Service?

The recent passing of SB2 by the Georgia House and Senate opens the doors for potential new opportunities for broadband in the rural areas we serve. Altamaha EMC is joining with Pineland Telephone Cooperative to apply for a grant to serve our members with high speed broadband internet connections.

Pineland provides plans with speeds ranging from 40 megabits per second (MBS) to 1,000 MBS. These speeds provide for reliable streaming of video such as Netflix, Amazon Video, YouTube and gaming by installing fiber optic lines to the home. The same channels available today from cable and satellite TV providers can be streamed as well by a single line of fiber. Other services offered by Pineland include telephone and security services.

We know many of our members have slow or poor connections from an existing broadband provider while others have no broadband connection due to their rural location. Usually some type of satellite or other wireless provider may be the only choice available. The purpose of the grant is to help Altamaha EMC provide the fiber infrastructure so that Pineland can give our members outstanding broadband service using EMC fiber through a partnership separate from our existing businesses.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

The grant is competitive. In order to be considered for funding, we are required to demonstrate the need for better internet connectivity by documenting the service levels available in our area now. To help our community and to help you, please take a moment and go to our website and take a quick survey. We need as many people as possible to complete the survey. Go to www.altamahaemc.com and look for the link to the survey.

If you own a farm or business that has broadband issues please also let us know by sending an email to contact@altamahaemc.com. We'd like to hear your story if your connection is causing issues with your farm or business. Your cooperation can help us provide better connectivity to those areas which may never get it otherwise. If you have questions about the survey, please call our office at 912-526-8181.

Safety Starts With You

Tips for spotting potential electrical hazards in your home

Electricity 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 Altamaha 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.

Surge Protectors

Power strips with surge protectors can help safeguard expensive equipment like tele-visions, 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 Altamaha 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. Always make sure 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 Altamaha EMC is committed to providing safe, reliable and affordable power to all our members. We hope you'll keep these electrical safety tips in mind so that you can note any potential hazards before damage occurs.

The **importance** of **electrical safety** for older adults

Statistics show that home fires, from a variety of causes, result in a significant number of deaths and injuries each year. According to the National Fire Protection Association, U.S. fire departments respond to approximately 45,210 home electrical fires annually. These fires cause an estimated average of 420 civilian deaths, 370 civilian injuries and $1.4 billion in property damage.

Although electrical hazards plague the public at large, older adults face the gravest risk. May is Electrical Safety Month, and the Electrical Safety Foundation International notes that adults over 65 are more than twice as likely to die from a house fire as the general population. This increases with age. People 75 years and older are challenged with a risk that is 2.8 times higher, and adults over 85 are at a staggering risk that is 3.6 times higher.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, the 65-and older population is growing faster than the total population in the U.S. The population of 65 and older is now the largest in terms of size and percent of the population compared to any previous census.

Electrical failures are a leading cause of home fires every year, and electrical distribution and lighting equipment fires have become more frequent with increasing dwelling age. Homes with aging electrical systems are at a heightened risk for electrical fires, posing a serious risk for older adults who have remained in the same home for many years.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, half the homes in use in the United States were built before 1973, long before many of the electronics and appliances we use today were even invented. Unfortunately, our increased demands for energy can overburden an older home's electrical system, causing fires or electrocutions.

Many home electrical fires can be prevented by using more up-to-date technology and by recognizing warning signs your home may be showing. Follow these safety tips to identify and prevent electrical hazards in your home:

- Regularly check all cords, outlets, switches and appliances for damage or wear.
- Use extension cords only temporarily.
- Be sure outlets are not overloaded with too many devices. They can overheat and start a fire.
- Look and listen for warning signs of an electrical problem, such as outlets and switches that are warm or make crackling, sizzling or buzzing sounds.
- Always replace fuses or circuit breakers with the correct size and amperage. Make sure all circuits are labeled correctly.
- Consider having your breakers upgraded to state-of-the-art arc-fault circuit interrupter circuit breakers. Keep the electrical panel accessible so you can quickly shut off power in an emergency.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Place one inside each bedroom and outside each sleeping area. Test them once a month, change the batteries at least once a year, and replace the alarm itself every 10 years.

Homes with aging electrical systems are at a heightened risk for electrical fires, posing a serious risk for older adults who have remained in the same home for many years.

Visit ***go.esfi.org/NESM*** for ESFI's full range of National Electrical Safety Month materials. Homes with aging electrical systems are at a heightened risk for electrical fires, posing a serious risk for older adults who have remained in the same home for many years.

Is your A/C ready for warm weather?

After a long, chilly winter, everyone is ready for warm summer weather. Is your air conditioning system as ready as you are?

There's not much worse than an A/C malfunction on the hottest day of the year. A springtime once-over can prevent that from happening. Plus, air conditioning is your biggest energy expense during the summer. Keep summer energy bills in check by following a few pre-summer rituals:

- Schedule a professional tuneup for your air conditioner before the hottest days arrive so yours won't break down during the busiest time and require repairs.
- If you're in the market for a new air conditioner, buy one with the highest seasonal energy efficiency ratio (SEER) rating you can afford. These appliances are the most efficient.
- Don't buy too big. An air conditioner should fit the size of your home. An HVAC professional can advise you about proper sizing.
- Turn on your ceiling fans. They increase the circulation of cool air and might allow you to move the thermostat up a notch.
- Close your window blinds during the hottest part of the day.
- Add insulation to your attic and caulk windows. Preventing cool air from leaking out of your house can reduce cooling costs by up to 20 percent.

HOLIDAY CLOSING NOTICE

All offices of Altamaha EMC will be closed Monday, May 27th in observance of Memorial Day.

The Lyons, Soperton and Swainsboro offices will reopen at 8:00 AM on Tuesday, May 28th.
The East Dublin office will reopen at 9:00 AM on Tuesday, May 28th.
The drive-in window at the Lyons office only will remain open on Memorial Day.
You can always make payments on your accounts by using our kiosk machines at any of our offices. Payments made using the kiosk post immediately to your account.
In the event of a power outage or other emergency, please call 912-526-8181.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Avoid placing items like lamps and televisions near your air-conditioning thermostat. The thermostat senses heat from these appliances, which can cause the A/C to run longer than necessary.

Source: energy.gov

Member RECIPES

Candied Bacon

Courtesy of Georgia Grown

Ingredients:

8 slices thick-cut bacon
1/2 cup light brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a shallow dish, combine brown sugar and cayenne pepper. Dip bacon slices in brown sugar mixture, pressing sugar to stick on bacon. Place coated bacon on parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake about 20 minutes per side or until crisp, depending on oven and the thickness of bacon.

Visit Georgia Grown's website, www.georgiagrown.com, for more great recipes from farms and producers across our state.

Photo credit:
COURTESY GEORGIA GROWN

Each month, our newsletter features recipes submitted by our members. If you have a favorite recipe and would like to share it with other readers in the Altamaha EMC service area, send a copy, complete with name, address and daytime phone number to: Tammye Vaughn, Altamaha EMC, P.O. Box 346, Lyons, GA 30436. Each month, a recipe will be selected for publication. The member who submitted the featured recipe will be given a $10 credit on their next Altamaha EMC bill. Due to limited space, not all recipes received will be featured. Recipes printed in *Plugged In* are not independently tested; therefore, we must depend on the accuracy of those members who send recipes to us.