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Five Ways to Safeguard Your Home This Winter

As the temperatures drop and the days grow shorter, there's a natural inclination to create a warm and cozy haven at home. Unfortunately, as we see increased use of heating equipment, candles and electrical items, the number of home fires tends to increase during winter months.

Here are five ways you can safeguard your home for the winter season.

1. Ensure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. If your detectors are battery-operated, replace the batteries annually. Test the detectors once a month and give them a good dusting to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris.

2. Inspect electrical cords. We depend on more cords during winter, whether for holiday lighting, extension cords or portable heaters. Before using any corded items, double check to make sure cords aren't frayed or cracked. If you use portable space heaters, remember to keep them at least 3 feet away from flammable items. Use models that include an auto shut-off feature and overheat protection. Space heaters can take a toll on your energy bills. Use them efficiently (to heat smaller spaces) and safely. Never plug a space heater into a power strip. Speaking of



power strips...

3. Avoid overloading electrical outlets and power strips. When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips can overheat and catch fire. If you use power strips for multiple devices, make sure the strip can handle the electrical load. For a safer bet, look for power strips that include surge protection.

4. Clean the fireplace to improve safety and efficiency. There's nothing better than a warm fire on a chilly night, but it's important to maintain your fireplace for safety. As wood burns, a sticky substance known as creosote builds up in the chimney. When creosote buildup becomes too thick, a chimney fire can ignite. The chimney should be cleaned at least once a year to reduce fire risks. Regular cleaning also improves air flow and limits the amount of carbon monoxide that seeps indoors.

5. Practice safety in the kitchen. As we spend more time in the kitchen during the holiday season, be mindful of potential fire hazards. Never leave food that's cooking on the stovetop unattended. Clean and remove spilled foods from cooking surfaces and be mindful of where you place flammable items like dish towels.

Altamaha EMC/Fiber wants you and your family to stay safe during the winter season. Visit www.altamahaemc.com for additional safety tips.



Walter Harrison Scholarship

Applications Now Available

Altamaha EMC is currently accepting applications for the Walter Harrison Scholarship, a program sponsored by Georgia's electric cooperatives.

The \$1,000 scholarship can be applied to academic expenses at any accredited two- or four-year university, college or vocational-technical institute in Georgia. Factors for consideration include grade point average, SAT scores, academic standing, scholastic honors, and financial need. A scholarship committee comprised of EMC directors and managers selects students who exceed in these areas and who struggle with college expenses. Fifteen scholarships will be awarded statewide in early spring of 2024.

Students who apply for the scholarship must live in the household of an Altamaha EMC/Fiber member.

Applicants must be accepted or enrolled in an accredited undergraduate degree program. They also must complete an application and write a biographical sketch which provides a preview of their future plans.

Created in 1985 by the board of directors of Georgia EMC, the scholarship pays tribute to the late Walter Harrison, a pioneer in the rural electricity movement and a leader at local, state and national levels in the electric cooperative program. Since 1985, Georgia's electric cooperatives have awarded more than \$250,000 to students via the Walter Harrison Scholarship program.

Applications are available for download on our website. You can also request an application by contacting Will NeSmith via email at will.nesmith@altamahaemc.com or call 912-526-2173.

Completed applications are due by January 26, 2024.



Foundation Scholarship

Applications Now Available

Four scholarships, worth \$1,000 each, will be awarded to local students in March 2024. The Altamaha EMC Foundation Scholarship program was founded in an effort to help local students further their education. The scholarships are funded entirely by members' donations through Operation Round Up. Applicants must be a high school senior and live in the household of an Altamaha EMC/Fiber member.

Applications are available on our website, www.altamahaemc.com. You can also request an application by contacting Will NeSmith via email at will.nesmith@altamahaemc.com or call 912-526-2173.

Scholarships will be awarded based on academic ability and financial need. Winners will be announced in March 2024. Completed applications are due by February 29, 2024.



A Lineworker's Timeline: Restoring Power

When the lights go out, one common question echoes in the minds of those affected: **“How long is it going to take?”** As a former lineworker, I’ve heard this question countless times in my career, often from people’s car windows, front porches, sidewalks, and even children in car seats. It’s a reminder of how heavily we rely on electricity for our daily lives and how much it enhances our comfort and convenience.

Restoring power is a rewarding endeavor. I’ve witnessed the joy and relief in people’s homes as their lights come back on after a storm or extended outage. No matter how tired or how long I’ve been working, that feeling makes it all worthwhile.

But what does it take to restore power, and why does it sometimes take longer than expected? Most people won’t have the opportunity to see the intricate work involved in ending outages. After reading this, you’ll gain a better understanding of the process and the dedication of Altamaha EMC/Fiber’s line crews in restoring your power.

The journey of electricity to your home is a complex one, involving power plants, substations, and miles of lines and poles. Power plants generate electricity at voltages below 30,000 volts. To transmit it over long distances, this voltage is “stepped up” in substations, often to 345,000 volts or higher. It then travels through transmission lines to reach another substation, where it is “stepped down” to 69,000 volts. Finally, local substations further reduce the voltage to 7,200 or 14,400 volts, suitable for delivery to the poles outside your home. These poles have a final transformer that reduces the voltage to the 120/240 volts powering your devices.

With so many miles of lines and thousands of poles, there’s significant exposure to potential issues that can lead to outages. Just as your home has circuit breakers, our system has breakers that help mitigate damage and reduce the scale of outages. These breakers play a crucial role in limiting the impact of outages and safeguarding equipment.

Now, let’s delve into the lineworker’s timeline during an outage:

The Outage Begins:

6:35 p.m.: Your local lineworker receives a phone call, and the first question is, “Is this an individual or a line outage?” If it’s a line outage, the lowest pole number helps them determine where to go.

Heading toward the outage:

7 p.m.: The drive to the outage location can take considerable time, depending on its distance.

7:45 p.m.: Upon arrival, the lineworker conducts a line inspection. This step involves multiple passes to first check the breaker’s status and then visually inspect the line for potential causes of the outage, such as fallen trees, tree limbs, old line repairs, car accidents, lightning, animals, or equipment failure. Terrain and off-road locations can further complicate this process, making it time-consuming.

The Process of Repairs:

8:30 p.m.: Once the cause of the outage is identified, safety procedures are initiated to protect lineworkers. These include isolating and grounding the line, which is crucial to guard against back feed from home generators. A safety briefing follows, ensuring everyone is aware of the plan, hazards, and ground locations.

9 p.m.: With all safety measures in place, the lineworker can begin the repair work. For instance, if a fallen tree is the culprit, removing it safely is a complex and time-consuming task. Special care is needed to prevent hazards like shifting or rolling trees, all while dealing with power lines under tension.

10:30 p.m.: The tree is cleared, and the necessary materials arrive. If the pole is off-road, lineworkers might need to climb it, adding complexity to the task. The process includes inspecting the pole, installing a new crossarm, and reattaching the wire.

11:45 p.m.: Repairs are completed, and the lineworker heads back to close in the breaker.

12:05 a.m.: Power is restored, and the outage ends.

Keep in mind that this is just one example, and each outage differs in terms of restoration time. If the pole had been damaged, the process would have taken even longer.

1 a.m.: The lineworker returns home, safe and sound.

We, as lineworkers, serve our communities and are dedicated to restoring power as quickly and safely as possible. Remember, Altamaha EMC/Fiber and its employees are your neighbors, living in the same communities and experiencing power outages just like you. We’re here to serve you.

—George McLendon, CEO/General Manager



Thanksgiving Closing Notice

Altamaha EMC will be closed
Thursday, November 23 and
Friday, November 24 for the
Thanksgiving Holidays.

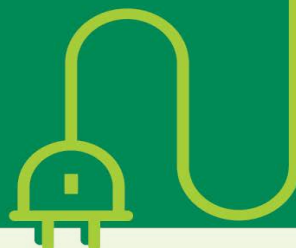
In the event of a power outage or other related problems, standby personnel will be on duty. You can report power outages by calling us at 912-526-8181 or 1-800-822-4563.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

The holiday season is upon us, and that means we'll be using more energy in the kitchen. When possible, cook with smaller countertop appliances instead of the stovetop or oven. Smaller appliances like slow cookers, air fryers and Instant Pots consume less energy.

When using the oven or stovetop, match the size of the pot to the heating element and place a lid over the pot while cooking. The food will cook faster, and you'll use less energy.

Source: Dept. of Energy



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Photo Courtesy Georgia Grown

Member RECIPES

Cajun Sweet Potato Salad

*Courtesy of Chef Deborah VanTrece
and Georgia Grown*

INGREDIENTS:

5 cups cubed and roasted sweet potatoes
 3/4 cup chopped celery
 1/2 cup chopped red peppers
 1/4 cup chopped green onions
 1/4 cup chopped red onions
 1/2 cup sweet pickle relish
 1 fresh jalapeno, seeded, minced
 1 teaspoon creole seasoning
 1 teaspoon onion powder
 1 teaspoon blackening seasoning
 3/4 cup local honey
 3 tablespoons yellow mustard
 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
 Salt and pepper, to taste
 Cooked and crumbled bacon, optional



DIRECTIONS:

In a large bowl, combine roasted sweet potatoes, celery, red peppers, green onions, red onions, pickle relish and jalapeno. In a small bowl combine creole seasoning, onion powder, blackening seasoning, honey, mustard and apple cider vinegar. Whisk together until blended. Pour dressing over sweet potato mixture and toss. Add salt and pepper to taste. Top with crumbled bacon, if desired. Serve chilled or at room temperature. Serves 6.

*For recipes from farms and producers
across our state, visit
www.georgiagrown.com*