



Farming ranks second among most hazardous industries

We don't have to remind those who work the land and raise livestock they have a potentially dangerous occupation. However, due to the nature of the job and because of long days and tiring work, here are some reminders about electrical dangers on the farm or ranch.

Overhead power lines

If you make contact with a power line, guy wire, power pole, electrical box or any other electrical equipment, do not get out of your cab or truck. Stay put and call 911 to dispatch the local utility to deenergize the power.

If you must get out due to smoke or fire, make a solid jump out without touching any part of the tractor or vehicle, and hop away as far as you can, keeping both feet together as you hop. Another option (after you make a clean exit) is to shuffle or waddle away, while keeping your feet together and on the ground.

Once you are out, never try to reenter the cab or truck.

Determine proper clearance

Contact us to measure power line heights: do NOT do this yourself. Once you know the heights, you can determine appropriate equipment, implement and extension clearances. Always maintain at least 10 feet between the power line and the tallest height of the equipment being transported. Keep in mind due to wear, age and even weather conditions, power lines can change height. Please contact us with any concerns. It's good to know power line clearance, but always have a spotter.

Call us before moving or adding a grain bin

The National Electrical Safety Code addresses grain bins and their proximity to power lines with very specific requirements. The requirements are in place to help keep farmers safe and to decrease the chances of farming equipment and machinery coming in contact with power lines. If you are planning on building a grain bin or remodeling around an area that already has one, contact Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative at 406-488-1602. We can help with specific code requirements. The taller a grain bin, the farther it must be placed from a power line.

Always dig safely

Whether you are installing new fenceposts or using large tilling tools, call 811 before you dig to have underground utilities marked. Even if you think you know where buried gas, power and other lines are, don't rely on your memory. Get all utilities marked so you know for sure. Utility locators dispatched by 811 do not mark private lines.

Use standby generators with care

If you have a standby generator to provide essential power during an outage, be sure to correctly use the transfer switch. Once you properly engage the switch, it stops your farm's generated power from entering utility lines, or backfeeding, which can electrocute lineworkers who are working to restore power.

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative strives to keep our members and community safe. If you have any safety concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our office at 406-488-1602. ■



Get smart about home lighting

by Abby Berry

Gone are the days when a simple flip of the switch was the only choice for illuminating our homes. While we still have this tried-and-true option, we've entered a new era of innovative and intelligent technologies, which includes smart lighting.

Smart lighting connects to Wi-Fi and offers an array of cutting-edge functionality and convenience. Let's look at the main benefits of smart lighting options.

Smart lighting is energy efficient. Most smart bulbs utilize LED technology, which is much more efficient than traditional incandescent lighting. Additionally, smart lighting gives you more control over how and when you light your home, ultimately resulting in less energy used for lighting.

Smart lighting provides convenience and control. Most smart bulbs can be controlled from an app on your smartphone or can be paired with your voice assistant, like Amazon Alexa. You can conveniently control lighting settings from anywhere in your home or when you're away. Whether you want to set a schedule for lighting or adjust brightness levels, these smart options offer effortless control from the comfort of anywhere!

Smart options empower you to personalize home lighting. Bright, warm, purple, green - whatever mood you want to create, smart lighting can help. For a more traditional look, try dimmable white bulbs. If you want to create the perfect ambiance for movie night, look for bulbs that can be adjusted for a variety of vibrant colors. The possibilities are endless.

While smart lighting offers convenience and control, keep in mind your wall light switch will need to

stay "on" for you to control the smart bulb from your phone or via voice command. To use a smart bulb, the wall switch it's connected to must be "on" so the bulb receives power, which enables it to connect to a Wi-Fi network.

If you need additional options to operate the lights, consider a smart light switch. Today's smart switches tend to play nicely with smart bulbs. If you want to control your smart bulbs with a physical switch (in addition to using your phone and voice commands), look for smart switches that include a built-in feature that allows both. Many smart light switches include motion detectors as well.

If you are looking to take the plunge and integrate multiple smart bulbs to your home lighting system, your best bet may be a kit, like the Philips Hue starter kit. Most kits include several bulbs and any additional tools you'll need to get started.

If you're new to smart home tech and looking to start small, try a smart bulb in a high-traffic area of your home. It's also worth noting that smart plugs are a great option and allow convenient control of lamps or other lighting fixtures that are plugged in to a wall outlet. Smart plugs are inexpensive and simply plug in to your existing outlet. Electrical items connected to the smart plug can be controlled from a smart phone app, just like smart bulbs.

Whether you're looking for more convenience, colorful options or better ways to manage energy use, smart lighting can provide multiple benefits. Determine which smart lighting features are most important for your needs, then start shopping! ■

KEEP IT COOL!

An air conditioner's filters, coils and fins require regular maintenance for the unit to function effectively and efficiently throughout its years of service. Neglecting necessary maintenance ensures a steady decline in air-conditioning performance, while energy use steadily increases.

FILTERS

The most important maintenance task to ensure the efficiency of your air conditioner is to routinely replace or clean its filters. Clogged, dirty filters reduce the amount of airflow and significantly reduce a system's efficiency. In addition, when airflow is obstructed, air can bypass the filter and deposit dirt directly into the evaporator coil and impair the coil's heat-absorbing capacity. Replacing a dirty, clogged filter with a clean one can lower your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5% to 15%.

For central air conditioners, filters are generally located somewhere along the return duct's length. Common filter locations are in walls, ceilings or in the air conditioner itself. Room air conditioners have a filter mounted in the grill that faces into the room.

Some types of filters are reusable; others must be replaced. They are available in a variety of types and efficiencies. Clean or replace your air-conditioning system's filter or filters every month or two during the cooling season. Filters may need more frequent attention

if the air conditioner is in constant use, is subjected to dusty conditions or you have fur-bearing pets in the house.

COILS

The air conditioner's evaporator coil and condenser coil collect dirt over their months and years of service. A clean filter prevents the evaporator coil from soiling quickly. In time, however, the evaporator coil will still collect dirt. This dirt reduces airflow and insulates the coil, reducing its ability to absorb heat. To avoid this problem, check your evaporator coil every year and clean it as necessary.

Outdoor condenser coils can also become dirty if the outdoor environment is dusty or if there is foliage nearby. You can easily see the condenser coil and notice if dirt is collecting on its fins.

You should minimize dirt and debris near the condenser unit. Your dryer vents, falling leaves and lawn mower are all potential sources of dirt and debris. Cleaning the area around the coil, removing any debris and trimming foliage back at least 2 feet allow for adequate airflow around the condenser.

FINS

The aluminum fins on evaporator and condenser coils are easily bent and can block airflow through the coil. Air-conditioning wholesalers sell a tool called a "fin comb" that will comb these fins back into nearly original condition.

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Discounts offered for Medora vacation

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) is offering its members a discount by being a Touchstone Energy® member. Simply call 800-MEDORA-1 and give the discount code of “Touch 2023” for a 15% discount on all of the following during any night of the season:

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- Elkhorn Quarters
- Badlands Motel
- Rough Riders Hotel
- Medora Campground

Operating report

Year to date:	April 2022	April 2023
Total miles energized	2,141	2,149
Total number of meters	6,227	6,242
Kilowatt-hours sold	103,239,103	131,353,053
Revenue	\$10,727,607	\$13,543,822
Total expenses	\$10,902,250	\$13,173,314
Operating margins	\$450,404	\$2,701,954

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