

If the Lights Go Out, Do You Know What To Do?



**MESSAGE
FROM
MANAGER
LEROY T.
SKLOSS**

A year ago this month, an unusual series of events nearly plunged most of the state into darkness. A deep cold snap, coupled with failures at several power plants, led to rolling blackouts that surprised many electricity users.

The rolling blackouts, which lasted from minutes to a few hours, were necessary to help the state's major power grid limp through the crisis, which was brought on by high demand from folks trying to stay warm paired with an unexpected loss of generation.

The possibility of more rolling blackouts—or worse, a complete fail-

more generation is built, an ERCOT forecast predicts.

If the call goes out for usage cuts, would you heed it? If the power fails, whether because of a grid emergency or storm, do you know what to do?

If a power emergency is imminent and an alert is issued, we ask that you cooperate. Switch off lights and appliances that you can live without. Turn the thermostat on your home's air system cooler in winter or warmer in summer. Every bit of power we can save in that situation could keep the crisis from becoming worse.

If the grid becomes overloaded and goes down, it could take many hours or even days for it to come back up.

If a rolling blackout hits your area, turn off everything that was running except one light. That way, when power is restored, you'll know it. Leaving big energy consumers such as your air system or oven switched on could cause a surge that might blow a circuit.

If the power does fail for longer than a couple of hours, keep some of these tips in mind.

- If it's cold, gather everyone in the warmest room in the house. If you have an alternate source of heat such as a fireplace, use it. But be sure there's plenty of ventilation.

- Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to keep the cold air in.

- If you have a generator, don't hook it to your home's wiring.

This can put your co-op's service personnel at risk of injury or electrocution. Operate the generator in a dry, well-ventilated area and plug appliances into it.

We don't expect the power to fail, and we at Karnes Electric Cooperative work hard to see that it doesn't. But if the lights go out, we are ready. We want you to be prepared, too.



2012 SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Rural scholarships will again be available through Karnes Electric Cooperative this year, thanks to a law enacted in 1997. Nonprofit electric cooperatives can put unclaimed funds—previously collected by the Comptroller's Office for the Texas General Fund—to use for student scholarships.

The Karnes Electric Cooperative Board of Directors has approved the awarding of 10 \$1,000 scholarships this year. These scholarships will be awarded to graduating high school seniors who are legal dependents of active members receiving electric service from Karnes Electric Cooperative.

Applications will be available at all schools in the Karnes Electric service area. Applications must be received by the main office in Karnes City by 5 p.m. March 30. Applications received after that date will not be eligible. Awards will be announced within 60 days of this date.

Karnes Electric is excited to be able to provide these scholarships. Please check with your school counselor if you or someone you know is interested and meets the qualifications. If you need additional information you may call our main office at (830) 780-3952, and ask to speak to Janet Scheffler or Karen Brysch, or email kbrysch@karnesec.org.

ISTOCKPHOTO | THINKSTOCK



Blackouts throughout the Texas power grid are a possibility in extreme weather.

ure of the power grid—is a real one, according to the grid operator for most of the state, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas.

As early as this summer, there could very well be more power alerts and more rolling blackouts unless

Boost Mobile Home Efficiency

BY BRIAN SLOBODA

Manufactured (or mobile) homes often log disproportionately higher energy bills than traditional wood-frame or modular homes. But you can take steps to help manage energy costs and increase comfort.

BELLY BOARD PROBLEMS—In most manufactured homes, the belly board holds the insulation in place under the floor and serves as a vapor barrier. The belly board can be damaged by animals or deteriorate over time, allowing the floor insulation to become moisture-laden or to simply fall out, exposing ductwork and dramatically increasing energy losses.

AIR LEAKAGE/INFILTRATION—Infiltration of excessive outside air can be a major problem. Specific problems include deteriorated weatherstripping; gaps in the “marriage wall” that joins multiple units making up the home; holes in the ends of ducts; gaps around wall registers and behind washers and dryers; and unsealed backing to the electrical panel. This job will require you to crawl under the home looking for gaps and filling them with weatherstripping and insulation.

CROSSOVER DUCTS—Sealing the ducts that run under the sections making up your mobile home will result in tremendous energy savings and increased comfort. Crossover ducts are often made of flexible tubing and are therefore prone to collapse and are easy for animals to chew or claw into. Crossover ducts made of thin sheet metal can leak heated or cooled air to the outdoors. Repairs are gen-



erally easy, using special duct sealant or metal tape. If you can afford the upgrade, consider replacing a flexible crossover duct with metal ductwork.

LACK OF INSULATION—Insulation levels and R-values in walls, floors and ceilings in manufactured homes can be woefully inadequate. If it is easily accessible, adding additional insulation to ceiling and floors will help. However, adding insulation to walls will be a problem without major renovations that are often not cost-justified.

UNINSULATED DUCTWORK—Ductwork itself may not be wrapped with insulation, allowing heating and cooling losses. Wrapping ductwork will lead to energy savings.

SINGLE-GLAZED WINDOWS AND UNINSULATED DOORS—Most manufactured homes come with single-glazed windows and uninsulated doors, which have a low R-value. Replacing the windows with double- or triple-glazed windows or adding storm windows will help to make the home more comfortable. An insulated door will also help. At a minimum, you should add weatherstripping to doors and windows. Also, a window film kit is an easy and inexpensive upgrade that will help prevent heat loss.

Brian Sloboda is a program manager for the Cooperative Research Network.



KARNES ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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CAULK UP THE SAVINGS

BY BOB DICKELMAN

The greatest sources of heating and cooling losses in your home are often invisible air leaks. As a result, controlling air leaks provides the best way to extend the life of your home, conserve energy, save money and increase comfort.

Bottom line? If you don't tighten up your home first, money spent on insulation may be wasted.

Fortunately, you can seal a lot of leaks around your home's exterior with less than \$100 worth of caulk. It's generally possible to seal openings up to one-quarter inch between window frames and siding or around door frames. For larger gaps, add a backing material before caulking, or use a spray foam sealant instead.

Most types of outdoor caulk are sold in tubes that fit a caulking gun. In addition, some caulks come in aerosol cans; they're a good choice for filling

gaps up to one-half-inch wide around pipes and wires.

When shopping for caulk, there are myriad choices. Prices range from a couple of dollars to several dollars per tube, so be sure to read the labels and choose a product that will adhere best to the materials you're sealing.

If your budget allows, spend a little more for a higher-quality caulk. Inexpensive caulks may last only a few years, while premium-priced caulks are rated for 20 years or more.

Caulk like a pro

- As a rule of thumb, you'll probably use half a cartridge per window or door and up to six cartridges for foundation work.

- Most caulks pose no known health hazards after they're fully cured. However, some high-performance caulking compounds contain irritating or potentially toxic ingredients, so you should carefully read the manufacturer's

instructions and take the appropriate precautions.

- The best time to apply caulk is during dry weather when outdoor temperatures are above 45 degrees. Low humidity is important during application to prevent cracks from swelling with moisture.

- If the gap you're sealing is too wide, use a special filler made for the purpose. You'll find fillers in the caulking department of your local hardware store or home center. However, note that fillers are not designed for exposure to the elements, so you'll need to caulk or seal over them.

- Before applying new caulk, remove the old caulk or paint residue with a putty knife, stiff brush or special solvent.

- Make sure your work area is dry so you won't seal in moisture.

- Hold the caulking gun at a consistent angle; 45 degrees is best.

- Caulk in a straight, continuous

COMMON CAULKING COMPOUNDS

CAULK TYPE	RECOMMENDED USES	CLEANUP	SHRINKAGE	ADHESION	COMMENTS
Silicone	Seals most dissimilar building materials such as wood, stone, vinyl, metal flashing and brick.	Immediately with dry cloth and mineral spirits or naphtha	Little or none	Good to excellent	Permits joints to stretch or compress. Will stick to painted surfaces, but paint will not adhere to most cured silicones.
Polyurethane, expandable spray foam	Expands when curing. Good for larger cracks. Use in nonfriction areas because foam becomes dry and powdery over time.	Immediately with solvent such as lacquer thinner	None; expands quite a bit	Good to excellent	Quickly expands to fit larger, irregularly shaped gaps. Flexible. Can be applied at variable temperatures. Must be painted for exterior use to protect from ultraviolet radiation.
Water-based spray foam	Around window and door frames in new construction or remodeling projects; smaller cracks.	Water	None; expands 25 percent	Good to excellent	Takes 24 hours to cure to a soft consistency. Will not overexpand to bend window frames. Must be exposed to air to dry. Not useful for larger gaps, as curing becomes difficult.
Butyl rubber	Seals most dissimilar materials such as glass, metal, plastic, wood and concrete. Seals around windows and flashing; bonds loose shingles.	Mineral spirits or naphtha	5 to 30 percent	Good	Lasts 10 or more years. Resilient, but not brittle. Can be painted after one week. Variable shrinkage may require two applications. Does not adhere well to painted surfaces.
Oil- or resin-based	Seals exterior seams and joints on almost all building materials.	Mineral spirits or naphtha	10 to 20 percent	Good	Low cost. Rope and tube forms available. Oils dry out and cause material to harden and fall out. Low durability; lasts 1-4 years. Poor adhesion to porous surfaces. Should be painted. Limited temperature range.

stream, avoiding stops and starts, and make sure the caulk sticks to both sides of the crack or seam.

- Start caulk at the bottom of an opening to avoid bubbles.
- Release the trigger on the caulking gun before pulling it away from the crack to prevent applying too much caulk. A caulking gun with an automatic release makes this much easier.
- Don't skip. If the caulk shrinks, reapply it to form a smooth bead that completely seals the crack.
- If caulk oozes out of a crack, use a putty knife to push it back in.
- Once you've applied caulk, it takes time for it to dry, or cure. Curing time is described in two ways. The tack-free time tells you how quickly the fresh caulk's outer surface will dry or skin over. The total cure time indicates the time required for the caulk to become completely stable—or reach the point where no further drying or shrinking will occur.
- Don't allow pets and small children to come into contact with fresh caulk.

Use expanding foam for large gaps

- Be sure to use the correct type of spray foam for the job. Polyurethane expandable spray foam works well around pipes and gaps around the foundation. However, this type of sealant expands with so much force that it can cause damage to window and door frames. In those spots, use a water-based spray foam specifically designed for the job.
- Expanding foam is ideal for filling cracks that caulks can't handle. It comes in aerosol cans and takes a short time to cure. The foam is very sticky and attaches itself quickly, so be prepared to pick up any messes fast.
- To seal gaps too wide for foam, use foil-faced bubble wrap. For really large holes, cut sections of rigid foam insulation to fit and then glue into place with expanding foam before covering the area with wood or another appropriate building material.

Bob Dickelman writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Space Heater Safety

Many people turn to space heaters as a convenient source of warmth in winter months. However, space heaters can be dangerous if not used properly.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than 25,000 residential fires every year are associated with space heaters. More than 300 people die in these fires. In addition, an estimated 6,000 people annually receive hospital emergency care for burn injuries connected with space heaters.

Space heater hazards stem not just from fires caused by contact with or close proximity to heating elements. They also include fires started by flammable fuels used in the heater, defective wiring in the appliance, and carbon monoxide poisoning caused by improper venting or an incomplete combustion of fuels.

Here are some tips for using your electric space heater safely:

- Keep the heater at least 3 feet from flammable items such as curtains, furniture or bedspreads.
- Select a space heater with a guard around the heating element.
- When buying a heater, choose one that has been tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing institution such as Underwriters Laboratories.

- Buy a heater that can handle the area that you want to heat.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Never leave a space heater unattended.
- Never go to sleep with a space heater on.
- Never use or store flammable liquids near a space heater.
- Do not use a heater in a bathroom—it's a high-moisture area that could damage the appliance.
- Keep heaters away from water to prevent electrocution.
- Do not use an extension cord with a space heater.
- Do not use the heater to dry clothes.
- Be sure the heater's plug fits snugly in an outlet. The cord and plug may feel warm when operating because the unit draws so much power, but they should not feel hot. If they do, unplug the heater and have a qualified repair person check for problems.
- Do not attempt to repair a broken heater yourself. It should be checked and repaired by a qualified appliance service center.

Source: The Consumer Product Safety Commission

SEVEN DAYS TO A SAFER HOME

When you're a parent, safety is an important part of protecting your family. You probably know about childproofing and some other safety basics, but what about bigger safety issues such as fire, floods or other natural disasters that can strike without warning?

Below, you'll find one easy thing to do each day for a week to help plan and prepare to keep your family safer. The end result is a safer home in seven simple steps.

DAY 1: CREATE A FIRE ESCAPE PLAN. Draw a simple floor plan of your home. On it, mark two exits from every room, including windows, and an assembly point outside of your home. Write "Call 911" on the escape plan and post it in a central location, such as the refrigerator door. Hold a fire drill with all members of your family to be sure everyone understands the plan.

DAY 2: INSTALL/CHECK SMOKE ALARMS. Smoke alarms save lives. Install at least one Underwriters Laboratories-listed smoke alarm on every level of your home, including the basement and outside each sleeping area. Once you have them installed, test them once a week and replace batteries twice a year.

DAY 3: PICK A MEET-UP SPOT. An important part of any safety plan is a designated meet-up spot in case disaster prevents you from reaching your home. Choose a meeting place away from the home with your kids, and make sure they know how to get there. Families that have discussed where they'll meet and what to do in various situations are always better prepared when disaster strikes.

DAY 4: CHOOSE AN EMERGENCY CONTACT. Designate an out-of-town relative or friend to be your family's emergency contact and keep their information with you at all times. Let that person know that they are your family's go-to contact.

DAY 5: REVIEW KIDS' INFORMATION. When old enough, children should know their full name, parents' full names, address (including city and state), home phone number (including area code) and parents' work or cellphone numbers. Younger kids can work on learning their full name and phone number first and then your out-of-town contact as soon as they are able. A fun way to teach younger children your phone number? Turn it into a song!

DAY 6: PREPARE AN EMERGENCY KIT. Kits should include:

- Five days' worth of nonperishable food and water
- Can opener
- Flashlight
- Portable emergency radio (hand-crank, solar-powered or battery-operated)
- Batteries
- Any prescription medication needed by family members
- First aid kit
- List of phone numbers of relatives
- Neighbors and utility company phone numbers and information
- Pictures and descriptions of your family
- If you have pets, include five days' worth of canned pet food and water, sturdy leashes, harnesses or carriers, current photos and descriptions, and a litter box.

DAY 7: PRACTICE. Now that you have a plan, it's time to make sure that everyone in your family really understands how to put it into action. Review the information from the previous days. Make sure your kids are comfortable with the plan and set a date for your next family fire drill and safety review and put the date on the calendar.

As time goes by, remember that kids get older and furniture moves. Be sure to review and adjust your plan on a regular basis.

Source: www.safetyathome.com

The only thing old-fashioned
about co-ops is our
business ethic.



Electric cooperatives were founded over 65 years ago based on consumer protections and ethical guidelines—ideas that are apparently considered old-fashioned by some corporations.

While co-op values have never changed, we are hardly old-fashioned when it comes to new technology that improves service and controls costs. We operate by established principles, and innovation is one of them.

Co-ops are local businesses run by local people.

It's a little something we call

The Home Team Advantage.

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Welcome

Karnes Electric Cooperative, Inc. is a locally owned and operated not-for-profit electric distribution utility. We serve 12 South Texas and Coastal Bend counties generally located between San Antonio and Corpus Christi, Texas. The rapidly growing area includes Atascosa, Bee, Goliad, Karnes and Wilson counties.



Karnes Electric is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative. Touchstone Energy is not a power company. It's a national alliance of local, consumer-owned electric cooperatives that are dedicated to providing members with reliable, high-quality service at competitive prices. Touchstone Energy is the brand name by which cooperatives identify and connect themselves with the alliance.

Karnes Electric Cooperative, Inc. offers competitive rates, state-of-the-art equipment and innovative solutions for your electric power needs.

Call us whenever you need The Home

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Two Locations

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