



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

CHELCO NEWS

Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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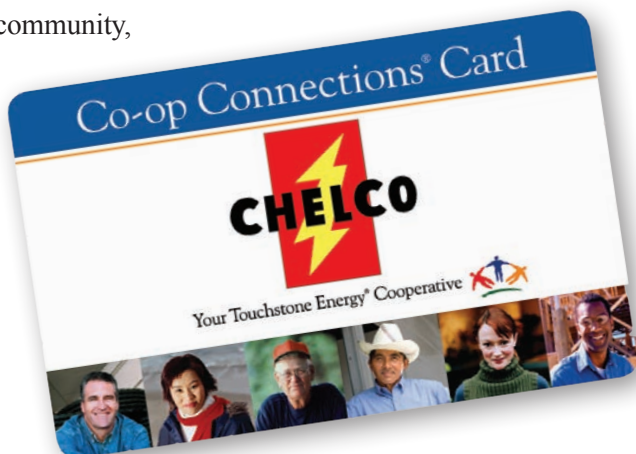
March/April 2011

Members save big with Connections Card

CHELCO's commitment to you goes beyond providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity. With the new co-op Connections Card, we'll put value in your wallet.

There have always been benefits for being a member of your electric cooperative, and you're about to get more with the Co-op Connections Card program.

We're always looking for ways to provide value to our members and our community,



especially during these tough economic times. CHELCO's Co-op Connections Card is a money-saving tool that connects you with discounts on everything from hotel stays to prescription drugs.

If this sounds like a great deal to you, you'll be able to get your card soon. The program will be introduced at CHELCO's annual meeting on April 16, at the Operations Center in DeFuniak Springs. Members who attend the meeting will be issued the first cards.

The remaining cards will be mailed to members following annual meeting.

A wide variety of merchants throughout our communities will accept the card. Be sure to keep your card with you at all times and present it at the register to receive your discount.

The Co-op Connections card will get you discounts of 10 percent to 60 percent on prescriptions at 60,000 pharmacies

nationwide, including CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, Target and more.

The program offers plenty of other advantages, as well. The card gives you access to discounts with almost 100 national retailers like Walmart, Sears Select, Hertz, Motel 6 and more. You can save on appliances and furniture, as well as insulation for your home or energy-efficient windows.

The list of discounts goes on and on. You can check out the great national discounts at www.connections.coop. A search feature lets you enter your zip code and the product or service you're looking for and gives you a list of participating retailers.

The best news yet – the card is free, it doesn't expire, there are no charges or fees, and any member of your family can use it.

The card is one more way Touchstone Energy Cooperatives are partnering with you to make your life better.

We hope local businesses participating in the Co-op Connections Card program will benefit from increased traffic by CHELCO members. Businesses can sign up for the program at no cost. If you'd like your business to be included, please contact Christopher Cherenzia, CHELCO's Manager of Marketing, at 892-2111.

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The Co-op Connections Card has saved card holders more than \$22 million just in prescription drug discounts since the program began.

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Chief Financial Officer

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Dewyne Douglass 4
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Gerald Edmondson 6
Don McKnight 7
Gayle Hughes 8
Burt Cosson 9

The Board of Trustees normally meets the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at the headquarters in DeFuniak Springs.

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RATES RESIDENTIAL

Customer Charge
Single Phase \$24.00; Three Phase \$34.60

Energy Charge
7.046 cents per KWH + or - Wholesale
Power Adjustment

GENERAL SERVICE NON-DEMAND

Customer Charge
Single Phase \$24.00; Three Phase \$34.60

Energy Charge
6.459 cents per KWH + or - Wholesale
Power Adjustment

GENERAL SERVICE DEMAND

Customer Charge
Single Phase \$35.00; Three Phase \$40.00

Energy Charge
4.265 cents per KWH

Demand Charge
50-499 KW bill at \$6.22 per KWH + or -
Wholesale Power Adjustment
Other applicable taxes, charges and fees
may apply.

TERMS OF PAYMENT

If a member's account becomes delinquent for non-payment of a final bill, all cost incurred in the collection of the account including, but not limited to attorney's fees, court cost and fees charged by a collection agency, shall be paid by the member.

To report power outages or other electrical problems Call 1-800-342-0990 or 892-2111

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In Brief...

CHELCO offices close for training

All CHELCO offices will be closed on Thursday, May 5, for a company-wide training day. Business will resume as usual on Friday, May 6.

Have you checked out a Kill-a-Watt at the library?

If you haven't been to your local library, you may be surprised at what can be checked out. Libraries in Walton County and the Crestview and Niceville libraries in Okaloosa County now have devices that can help you save money on your electric bill. In January, CHELCO donated Kill-a-Watt devices, which can help you measure your energy consumption and become more knowledgeable about what adds to your power bill.

The Kill-a-Watt measures energy consumption of household appliances by the kilowatt hour – the same unit of measure that is on power bills. It will show you how much it costs to leave electrical devices plugged in.

Visit one of the libraries today and get started saving money.

American Cancer Society needs drivers in Holmes County

The American Cancer Society is looking for volunteers in our area to provide transportation to and from cancer treatments for people in Holmes County. Volunteers would need to provide a valid driver's license and proof of insurance to the American Cancer Society. Volunteers may donate as much time as they desire. For more information, visit www.cancer.org or call 1-800-227-2345.

Head Start/Early Head Start taking applications

The Tri-County Head Start/Early

Head Start program is now taking applications. The program is a child and family development program that offers education, health, nutrition, family support, transportation assistance and disability services. Call today to sign up - Administration: 548-9900; Walton: 892-7635; Chautauqua: 892-6144; Early Head Start: 548-9900.

Proof of income, proof of birth and an immunization record are required.

Celebrate Earth Day in April

Earth Day takes place on April 22. Earth Day began in 1970 and led to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species acts. Earth Day is credited with starting the emphasis on recycling and energy efficiency.

You can do your part this Earth Day by recycling, exchanging old incandescent bulbs for efficient compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) and by purchasing green energy through CHELCO's Green Power Choice Program. Members may purchase 100 kilowatt hour blocks (about 8 percent of a typical household's monthly use) for just \$2 a month in addition to their regular power bills. The minimum participation period is one year. Contact CHELCO at 892-2111 to sign up.

Food drive fills local food banks

The annual National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) "Stamp Out Hunger" food drive takes place on Saturday, May 14, in Okaloosa and Walton counties. All the food collected by letter carriers goes to local food banks to help residents who need assistance.

Place canned and/or non-perishable food items in your mailbox that day, or place items in a plastic bag and hang it from your mailbox.

Continued on page 11

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to CHELCO News, P.O. Box 512, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435. The magazine keeps members informed on CHELCO news and events, available services and local happenings. Comments about the magazine should be directed to Kathy Morrow at kmorrow@chelco.com or 892-5069, ext. 105.

Pharmacy discount FAQ

Does everyone in my family need an individual card?

No. One card may be used by the entire family.

Can I use my Co-op Connections Card with my current insurance benefits to reduce my costs?

Your card cannot be used in conjunction with insurance. However, use your card to purchase prescriptions not covered by your insurance plans at a discounted rate.

Where can I get a list of pharmacies that accept the card?

The Co-op Connections Card is accepted at more than 60,000 retail pharmacies nationwide, including CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, Target and more. You can

find participating pharmacy locations at www.locateproviders.com.

Will I always receive the lowest price?

Yes. You will receive the best price available to you through this program at the pharmacy. On occasion, pharmacies will price a particular medication lower than the discount rate provided by the card. If that occurs, you will receive the lower of the two.

Can I find out the discounted price of my prescriptions before going to the pharmacy?

Yes. If you know the name, strength and quantity of the medication, you can find the discounted price of the medication by visiting www.rxpricequotes.com.



Save Every Day
on the everyday things and get more out of life.

Co-op Connections® Card
CHELCO
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

www.chelco.com 1-800-342-0990

Find out what your FREE Co-op Connections® Member Benefits Card can do for you!



Moist & Chewy Oatmeal Cake

Jane Miller

Heat oven to 350 degrees.

Mix and let stand:

1 cup oats
1 ½ cups boiling water

Cream together:

½ cup butter or shortening
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup white sugar

Add:

2 eggs

Mix together with all ingredients:

1 ⅓ cups all purpose flour
2 tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. soda
1 tsp. vanilla

Pour into a greased 9x13 pan and bake until center springs back when lightly touched or a toothpick inserted into the middle comes out clean.

Topping

Mix together:

4 Tbs. melted butter
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup coconut
1 cup chopped nuts
1 tsp. vanilla

Spread on hot cake and broil for 2 minutes.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Check your HVAC system's air filter monthly. If it looks dirty, change it. A dirty filter makes your system work harder

SOURCE:
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Voting important in upcoming cooperative mail ballot process

Your cooperative's 70th Annual Meeting of Members is April 16. Voting for trustees and for the bylaw revisions is important.

Ballots for CHELCO's 2011 election of trustees and for a revision of the cooperative bylaws are in the mail and will be arriving in your mailboxes soon. When you receive your ballot, your board recommends marking the ballot in favor of the bylaw revision, along with your vote for the three trustees.

Returning ballots promptly is important, because they must be received by the independent accounting firm by April 6 to be counted. The election is "at large," and you may vote for one candidate from each district regardless of where you live.

Districts 3, 5 and 8 are involved in this year's election. District 3 is currently represented by Jim Bishop. District 5 is currently represented by Ronald Jones. District 8 is currently represented by Gayle Hughes.

The ballot packet contains information about the Annual

Meeting, complete profiles for each candidate, the bylaw revisions, the ballot and a registration/certification page, as well as information about entertainment and other activities.

Once members have returned their voted ballots, they will be counted by Tipton, Marler, Garner & Chastain, CPAs, and the results will be announced at the 70th Annual Meeting of Members on April 16.

All returned registration pages will be entered in a special drawing for two prizes to be awarded at the Annual Meeting. The prizes are a flat screen color TV valued at approximately \$250 and a \$100 Walmart gift card. These prizes will be awarded separately to two lucky members.

Those who attend the Annual Meeting will be eligible for a drawing with numerous small prizes and two grand prizes. The grand prizes are \$750 cash and a \$500 credit on the winner's power bill.

Mark your calendar and make plans to attend the Annual Meeting on April 16 at CHELCO's Operations Center, 723 U.S. Highway 331 North.

AGENDA: 2011 Annual Meeting of Members

9:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Registration

9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Entertainment:
Emerald City Quartet

11:00 a.m.

Meeting called to order.

Invocation

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Welcoming Address:

Ronald Jones, President of the Board of Trustees

Determination of quorum

Announcement of election results

Approval of minutes of previous meeting of the members

Report of the President

Report of the Treasurer

Report of the CEO

Drawing of prizes

Question and answer session

Noon

Adjournment

Emerald City Quartet

Will entertain you from

9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

at CHELCO's Annual Meeting

CHELCO seeks Mystery Shopper volunteers

In order to gain a better perspective of our members' customer service experience, CHELCO is looking for volunteers for a mystery shopper program. A mystery shopper is an experienced member who will evaluate the services CHELCO provides.

This program is a six-month program that involves conducting monthly secret evaluations of the Member Services Department and Customer Care Center. The goal of this program is to evaluate our customer service, appearance and cooperative knowledge. Mystery shoppers will receive a small stipend for their services.

Mystery shoppers must be willing and able to visit an assigned area office within a specified period. They must be willing and able to keep open lines of communication with the CHELCO Training Department. They must attend a two-hour training session before beginning evaluations. Finally, they must meet all of the following conditions:

- Must have at least 2 years of service with CHELCO
- Must be a member in good standing

- Must be willing to commit adequate time for training and evaluations
- Must have a working email account and/or phone number
- Must be literate
- Must have a service account with CHELCO

If you are interested in participating in the Mystery Shopper Program and meet the above qualifications, please submit your name and address to Ruth Edwards by email or phone before March 14, 2010, at redwards@chelco.com or 892-5069, ext. 109. Selected Mystery Shoppers will be notified by March 18.



Evacuation assistance requires you to register with county Emergency Management offices

If you require assistance because of an electrically-operated health aid or sheltering during evacuations because of physical, mental or sensory disabilities, you should register with your county's emergency management office. By registering, you preauthorize emergency response personnel to enter your home during search and rescue operations to assure your safety and welfare following a disaster.

Once you have registered, local emergency personnel will determine what measures need to be taken to meet your needs and ensure your safety.

To register, contact the EMS office for your county:

Walton: 892-8065
Okaloosa: 651-7560
Santa Rosa: 983-5360
Holmes: 547-1112

In addition to this measure, you also need to be prepared in the event of an outage if you rely on an electrically-operated health aid.

- Consider plugging important electronic devices into an uninterruptible power supply (UPS), which can provide power for several hours. Or, consider buying a generator in case of an extended outage. For safety reasons, contact an electrician before installing a generator.
- Keep cell phones charged and keep a corded land line nearby. Cordless phones don't work when the power goes out.
- Make plans ahead of time to move in with friends or family members, if necessary.
- Make sure to have an adequate supply of prescription drugs on hand.

Youth Tour program reaps four winners for D.C. trip

Four high school students are packing their bags and preparing for their trip to the nation's capital when school is out. The four are winners of CHELCO's annual Washington Youth Tour competition, which took place March 1.

The winners include Kenna Rogers and Austin Walthall, both of Crestview High School; Sara Schulmeister, Laurel Hill High School; and David Hodges, Paxton High School. In the event one or more of the winners can't participate, Rebecca Davis and Nathaniel Holley, both of Baker High School, were chosen as alternates.

When in Washington, CHELCO's four representatives will travel with approximately 25 other students from co-ops throughout Florida. Florida's group will be part of a delegation that numbers about 1,500 high school juniors, representing 46 states.

In CHELCO's competition, winners were chosen from a field of 16 representatives from 10 schools. A panel of three judges quizzed the students on CHELCO facts and the history of rural electrification. The judges selected the winners based on knowledge of subject, poise and

appearance, speaking ability and personality.

Prior to the competition, the students traveled to Tallahassee Feb. 9-10 as part of Florida's Youth Tour in the capital. While in Tallahassee, the Youth Tour participants took part in a mock session in the Senate and viewed a court case in the Florida Supreme Court. They also visited the Challenger Learning Center to participate in a demonstration on electricity and the IMAX theater to see a movie on the Hubble telescope.

In Washington, the students will visit all the capital's historic monuments, as well as the Smithsonian Institution and Mount Vernon. They will also visit legislators on Capitol Hill and cruise on the Potomac.

Through 28 years of CHELCO's Youth Tour, about 600 students have visited Tallahassee and 86 have made the trip to Washington during Youth Tour week.

Youth Tour gives public recognition to deserving young people who live within the cooperative's service territory. Through the program, high school juniors become acquainted with the cooperative way of business and

learn about their government.

Other students who participated in the 2011 Youth Tour competition and their schools include: Kaydee Willcox, Walton High School; Madison Spence and Hunter Bailey, Freeport High School; Jacob Leuze and Allison Stroop, South Walton High School; Jacob Wolak and Katherine Sims, The Collegiate High School; John Stevenson, Rocky Bayou Christian School; Rebekah Pruett and Nathan Ritterband, Niceville High School.

In addition to the students who represented area schools, three students participated in Youth Tour through a separate competition hosted by the Florida Electric Cooperatives Association. This competition is for students who are the children or grandchildren of cooperative employees, retirees or board members.

The three participants were Alex Brack, Walton High School, grandson of CHELCO retiree Evelyn Jones; Brandon Head, Freeport High School, son of Customer Care Representative Mary Head; and Emily McKinion, Crestview High School, daughter of Executive Assistant Denise McKinion.



Four students will go to Washington, D.C., in June as part of the Washington Youth Tour, a program for high school juniors whose parents live on cooperative lines. Two alternates were also selected in the event one or more winners can't go. CHELCO's representatives are Rebecca Davis (alternate), Baker; Sara Schulmeister, Laurel Hill; Kenna Rogers, Crestview; Austin Walthall, Crestview; David Hodges, Paxton; and Nathaniel Holley (alternate), Baker.



CHELCO's 2011 Youth Tour representatives take time out from Youth Tour activities to pose for a picture in Kleman Square, near the Challenger Learning Center. They are (front, from left) Jacob Wolak, The Collegiate HS; Kahler Lang, Walton HS; David Hodges, Paxton HS; Austin Walthall, Crestview HS; Alex Brack, FECA Contestant, Walton HS; Madison Spence, Freeport HS; Emily McKinin, FECA Contestant, Crestview HS; Katherine Sims, The Collegiate HS; Rebecca Davis, Baker HS; Allison Stroop, South Walton HS; Kaydee Willcox, Walton HS; Rebekah Pruett, Niceville HS; Kenna Rogers, Crestview HS; Jacob Leuze, South Walton HS; Kasey Harrison, Laurel Hill HS; Nathan Ritterband, Niceville HS; (back, from left) Nathaniel Holley, Baker HS; Brandon Head, FECA Contestant, Freeport; John Stevenson, Rocky Bayou Christian; Harley Rowe, Ponce de Leon HS; Hunter Bailey, Freeport HS; and Sara Schulmeister, Laurel Hill HS.



Three students entered a separate Youth Tour competition for the children or grandchildren of CHELCO employees, retirees or board members. The three are Brandon Head, son of Customer Care Representative Mary Head; Alex Brack, grandson of retiree Evelyn Jones; and Emily McKinin, daughter of Executive Assistant Denise McKinin.

Time running out to fill electric generation gap

Electric co-ops have important energy choices to make. We can't stall or wait for a magic "electricity" bullet. Tighter government regulations—and the high cost to comply with new rules—may signal lights-out for many of the nation's older coal-fired power plants at a time when forecasters predict energy demand will eventually outpace supply. We're approaching crunch time on our ability to keep the lights on—new power plants will need to be built.

The recent economic turmoil, terrible as it was, provided some much-needed breathing room on addressing our country's growing energy needs. But as the economy rebounds, so will our nation's hunger for electricity. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) predicts when the final 2010 numbers are tallied, energy use will shoot up 5 percent from 2009 levels.

We've encouraged co-op members to be energy efficient both for your sake (lower electric bills) and to help mitigate the need to build new generation sources. You've certainly done your part; between 1980 and 2006, the average amount of energy each American used dropped 2.5 percent. But with an ever-expanding population, these measures are not enough to completely offset escalating energy demand.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), the nation's bulk power grid watchdog, estimates that 135,000 MW of new generation needs to be built by 2017 to meet demand. Generation facilities on the drawing board, though, will only deliver 77,000 MW—leaving a generation gap.

Compounding this issue, some of our current power plants may soon be shut down by federal regulations. One NERC-commissioned report claims new government rules could force utilities to retire or retrofit 33,000 MW to 70,000 MW of generating capacity by 2015. Meanwhile, every year we delay building new plants drives up

construction costs. Waiting too long could cause power shortages by the end of this decade.

Traditional power plants (coal, natural gas, nuclear) take between three years and a decade to build—not leaving much wiggle room before shortages become a reality. Renewable energy resources, notably

wind farms, can be constructed more quickly, but they're not perfect options. It may sound cliché to say the wind doesn't always blow, but it's the truth—and you wouldn't be satisfied with only having power 40 percent of the time.

At CHELCO we're focused on affordability. Our nation needs to build new power plants before the need for electricity outstrips current generation resources. Although CHELCO doesn't build and operate power plants—as a distribution cooperative, we focus on delivering power to you—we're working with wholesale power suppliers like PowerSouth Energy Cooperative in Andalusia, Ala., to find the best fuel mix solution for your future. We appreciate your support as we make these critical and time-sensitive choices. Balancing your energy needs with electric reliability and affordability is one more way we're looking out for you.



Increase in home size can send energy bills soaring

American homes are 34 percent larger than they were 25 years ago—and those larger houses use more energy than smaller ones, even if they're brand-new and built to be energy efficient.

A study by SMR Research Corp. found that houses with more than 10 rooms use 18.8 percent more energy than eight-room homes, and 31.3 percent more energy than seven-room houses.

Despite better insulation and weatherproofing in newer houses, an increase in size could still send energy bills

through your new (larger) roof.

One result: The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) is finding that Americans who are building or buying new homes want fewer square feet. In fact, NAHB reports that 90 percent of builders are offering smaller homes than just a few years ago. Size and the efficiency of heating and cooling systems have become greater drivers during construction than upscale upgrades and spacious rooms.

EPA OFFERS NEW CLEAN-UP INFO FOR CFLS

By Megan McKay-Noe

As energy-savvy consumers know, equipping five of a home's most frequently used light fixtures with compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) can save a family \$70 a year in lighting costs. But what should you do when a CFL breaks?

CFLs are made of glass tubing containing about 4 milligrams of mercury. Although this isn't much—classic thermometers contain 500 milligrams of mercury—consumers should still take precautions if a CFL breaks, since mercury vapors may pose health risks. In December the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) updated the guidelines for cleaning a broken CFL.

"We want to provide consumers with the most important information they need to know on how to clean up a bulb without overwhelming them with detail," Richard Yost, an EPA spokesperson, stresses.

The revised guidelines break the process into three steps: what to do before cleanup, during cleanup, and after cleanup. More in-depth

guidelines are available at www.epa.gov/cflcleanup.

"We've split the detailed guidance into sections for clean up on hard surfaces and on carpeting," Yost notes. "This will aid consumers who only want the cleanup steps that address their particular situation."

The amount of time EPA recommends waiting before cleaning a broken bulb has been cut from 15 minutes to 5-10 minutes.

"The results from a 2008 study conducted by Maine on mercury exposure from broken bulbs showed mercury release peaks within the first 5 minutes of the bulb breaking," Yost explains. "Five to 10 minutes is sufficient time to clear the room, ventilate, and to gather the materials needed to clean up the broken bulb."

EPA also removed recommendations on how to handle clothing, bedding, or other soft materials exposed to a broken CFL.

"We want to keep the focus on the clean-up steps for the CFL," Yost says. "Each broken bulb situation is unique. If a consumer has a particular concern, they can contact EPA or their local/state environmental agency for assistance."

The updated guidelines feature a brochure on proper handling of CFLs, cleanup procedures, and recycling tips. The brochure, available in both English and Spanish, may be downloaded at www.epa.gov/cflcleanup. To learn more about CFLs, visit www.epa.gov/cfl.

Sources: ENERGY STAR, EPA

Is \$50 Yours?

If your account number is below, sign this page and mail it in with your bill to CHELCO or drop it off at any office. You'll win a \$50 credit on your next bill.




Donna De Vaux - 9000024725 | Terence Trier - 201072881

How to Clean Up a Broken Compact Fluorescent Lightbulb (CFL)



A CFL's glass tubing contains about 4 milligrams of mercury. While this isn't much (classic thermometers contained 500 milligrams) consumers should still take precautions if a CFL breaks.

- 1** Ventilate the room, then wait 5 to 10 minutes. 
- 2** Scoop up powder and glass fragments using stiff paper or cardboard. Seal in a plastic bag. 
- 3** Use duct tape to pick up any fragments or powder.
- 4** Immediately place all materials used to clean up and the plastic bag in an outdoor trash container. Remember to wash your hands. 
- 5** Not all recycling centers accept broken CFLs. Check with your local and/or state waste authority for disposal requirements, or visit Earth911.com.

To learn more visit epa.gov/cflcleanup. 

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation, Environmental Protection Agency

STAY SAFE ALL YEAR LONG: A HANDY CALENDAR PROVIDES MONTHLY REMINDERS TO KEEP YOUR HOME SAFE

By Megan McKay-Noe

When a light goes out, it's hard not to notice the bulb needs to be replaced (unless you like to stay in the dark). But how can you tell if your power outlets are working properly? You don't want an electrical fire to serve as your wake-up call that's something is amiss.

"Many homes are equipped with new technologies to help prevent electrical fires and injuries," Brett

Brenner, president of the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI), explains. "Unlike a lightbulb that goes dark when it needs to be replaced, there may not be any indication when these safety features aren't working properly. That's why ESFI recommends testing them every month."

Ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets and combination-type arc fault circuit interrupter (AFCI) circuit breakers are just some of the many safety features in your home that need regular attention.

"It's possible an outlet or circuit may work, but the protection isn't there—the only way to know is to push the 'test' button," Brenner notes.

May is National Electrical Safety Month, a time when CHELCO likes to educate consumers on ways to stay safe at home and on the job. But safety awareness shouldn't stop on May 31.

ESFI provides a Home Safety Calendar to help you remember when to perform routine maintenance and safety checks around the house. Some things, like vacuuming coils and changing furnace or air conditioning filters, should be done every three months. Other items, like testing GFCI outlets and smoke alarms, need to happen monthly.

"Taking care of these safety items on the first of the month when you're paying bills is a great time to knock a few things off the list. Then you don't have to worry about them for the rest of the month," Brenner recommends. "We created the calendar so you can put it on your refrigerator as daily reminder of simple steps to take every month to keep your family safe."

Learn more about home electrical safety by visiting ESFI's Virtual Home at <http://virtualhome.esfi.org>.

Sources: ENERGY STAR, EPA

Electrical Safety Calendar

Use this handy calendar to help keep your home safe. For more tips, visit esfi.org.

JANUARY

- Check and replace furnace filters

FEBRUARY

- Vacuum refrigerator coils

MARCH

- Replace smoke and carbon monoxide alarm batteries if not done in last 12 months

APRIL

- Check and replace furnace filters

MAY

- Clean air conditioners or schedule annual inspection
- Vacuum refrigerator coils

JUNE

- Dust light fixtures/lamps
- Schedule annual inspection of gas-powered dryer

JULY

- Check and replace air conditioning filters

AUGUST

- Vacuum refrigerator coils

SEPTEMBER

- Schedule annual furnace cleaning and inspection

OCTOBER

- Check and replace furnace filters

NOVEMBER

- Vacuum refrigerator coils

DECEMBER

- Dust light fixtures/lamps

ESFI recommends hiring a licensed, qualified home electrical inspector if:

Your home is more than 40 years old; your home had a major addition or renovation or major new appliance added in the last 10 years; and/or you are the new owner of a previously owned home.

Every month you should:

1. Inspect all electrical and appliance cords for damage

2. Test GFCIs & AFCIs

Whether you have a receptacle-type or circuit breaker-type ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI), pushing the TEST button should turn off power to the circuit. To restore power, press the RESET button. To test arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) push the TEST button. The breaker handle should go to the middle or off position. To reset, move the breaker handle to the OFF position and then to the ON position.



3. Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

Push the TEST button or use other procedures recommended by the manufacturer. Smoke alarm batteries should be changed at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps" or "beeps" to indicate low batteries, change them right away. Replace all smoke alarms at least every 10 years.



Source: ESFI

In Brief...

continued from page 2

You are invited to join Relay For Life

Relay For Life is a signature fundraising event of the American Cancer Society. There are many ways you can be involved in Relay For Life. You can be a team captain, a team member, a committee member, an event day volunteer or a donor. You can also be recognized at the event as a cancer survivor or a caregiver. Relay For Life wants you to join them in any capacity you can. Below are the Relay events you're invited to:

- Freeport, April 8-9
- Bonifay, April 8-9
- Niceville-Valparaiso April 15-16
- Crestview, April 15-16
- Destin, May 6-7
- South Walton, May 13-14
- DeFuniak Springs, May 13-14

If you would like to honor or remember a loved one who has battled cancer, there is a special "luminaria" ceremony held at every Relay For Life event. Your donation for each bag helps light the pathway the evening of the event. Each area has an individual Web page with more information about how to sign up for a "luminaria." Visit www.relayforlife.org to find a local Relay for Life Web page.



Warm weather brings scammers to your house

CHELCO will never send anyone to your house to ask you to pay your bill. And when someone does come for a legitimate reason, you'll see an employee in uniform, driving a vehicle with the CHELCO logo on it. If the employee isn't in uniform, he or she will have a valid CHELCO identification badge.

In the past, some disreputable people have pretended to be CHELCO employees either on the phone or in person, and they have asked for bill payments along with credit card information. CHELCO never makes this type of call and would not ask for a credit card number.

There are many types of scams that try to separate you from your money, and springtime is scam season. Don't be surprised if you get telephone calls, uninvited visitors looking for work and loads of door hangers offering landscaping, roofing, painting and home-repair services.

Your best bet: Say no to all of them. If you need work done around your house, visit www.myfloridalicense.com, the Florida Department of Business & Professional Regulation to verify a license or join a contractor referral network that recommends only contractors who are licensed, insured, bonded and experienced.

A few other tips:

- Be wary of contractors with out-of-state license plates or detachable, magnetic company signs on their trucks. These could be "travelers" who follow the warm weather from state to state and hire themselves out as home-improvement contractors. They're almost always unlicensed in your state, and if you discover a problem with their work later, they'll be long gone.
- Do not pay in cash, and do not pay up front. Instead, work out a payment schedule that allows you to pay in increments as the work is completed.
- Get bids from three reputable companies before you start. If you get one offer that's way lower than the other two, something is probably amiss.
- Don't fall for these two lines: "I just finished a job at your neighbor's house and I'll give you a good price if you hire me today because I'm already in the neighborhood" or "I have leftover materials from a job I just did and I'll sell/install them here for a deep discount because I don't need them."
- Notify authorities immediately if you think someone is a scammer.

Dryers need maintenance beyond the lint trap

You probably peel the lint out of your clothes dryer's lint trap after every load of laundry. But that's not enough to keep the appliance from posing a fire hazard for your home.

Add a few more maintenance checks to your laundry-day routine, including:

- Notice how long it takes the dryer to dry your clothes. If they're still damp at the end of a typical drying cycle, or if it's starting to take longer to dry clothes, your lint screen or exhaust duct is probably blocked.

- Clean the dryer vent and exhaust duct at least once a year. The duct is the coil that sends the hot dryer air to the outdoors. The vent is the hole where the hot air leaves the house. Both can get clogged with lint and overheat, send dirty, moist air back into your home, or even catch on fire. You might have to disconnect the exhaust duct from the dryer and from the vent to remove a blockage.

- Sweep behind your dryer regularly. Lint can accumulate there and also underneath. Move the dryer and clean the back of it. This might be a job for a service technician rather than for a do-it-yourselfer.



- If your exhaust duct is plastic or foil, replace it with a rigid or corrugated, semi-rigid metal duct. Plastic and foil are too flexible and trap lint easily. They're also easier to crush, which will prevent air from flowing through to the vent.

- Avoid throwing gasoline-, oil- or chemical-soiled clothes and towels into the dryer. Instead, wash them several times and line dry them. If you have to use the dryer for them,

choose the lowest setting, and remove them the minute the cycle is finished. Even washed-and-dried clothes that have come into contact with volatile chemicals can ignite. Best bet: Consider the clothes ruined and safely dispose of them.