



# CENTRAL ELECTRIC POWER ASSOCIATION

A tradition of dependable, hometown service since 1937

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## POWER LIFE SAFELY

### May is Electrical Safety Month

by Abby Berry

Every May, Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

Your electric cooperative understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety not only in May, but year-round.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected.



## Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home

**1. BE VIGILANT** Regularly inspect your home's electrical system for any signs of damage or outdated components and replace any frayed electrical wires or cords. The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating, or fraying. If you're relying on extension cords as permanent power solutions, consider contacting a qualified electrician to install additional outlets where you need them.

**2. USE SURGE PROTECTORS** Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances from surges with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Additionally, surge protectors can lose effectiveness over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.

**3. PRACTICE SAFE POWER STRIP USE** Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves, and hairdryers should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with a "busy" power strips can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

**4. WATER AND ELECTRICITY DON'T MIX** It may seem obvious, but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs, or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches or appliances — never handle electrical devices with wet hands. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in close proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms, and outdoor outlets.

**5. EDUCATE FAMILY MEMBERS** One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in case of emergencies.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for protecting your family, property, and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort — it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones.

*Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



# ANNUAL MEETING

Central holds annual meeting in Carthage

More than 300 people attended the 88th Annual Meeting of the membership of Central Electric Power Association March 18 at the coliseum in Carthage.

The crowd was entertained by Jason Runnels and Family, a southern gospel quartet based out of Rankin County. Members enjoyed the band's old convention-style singing.

Central Electric General Manager Brian Long opened the meeting followed by the invocation given by Phillip Crosby, a member of the board of directors. Mayor Laurie Henderson of Carthage welcomed the crowd and complimented Long and the board of directors for the wonderful job they do for the community.

Amy Tate, Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) southwest region executive leader, provided TVA updates to the members. TVA values their partnership with Central Electric Power Association and the hard work that has been accomplished through the years. Lydia Walters, the Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi's (ECM) vice president of communications, was a guest at the meeting.

Long reported that by the end of 2024, the association had 38,975 members in central Mississippi and 4,334 miles of underground and overhead distribution and transmission lines. Long also praised his staff for working hard, being safe, and keeping the lights on.

To conclude the meeting, a raffle took place. Dozens of prizes, including a smoker, were given to away to lucky members.

## The special prize winners were

**\$1,500**

**ELECTRICITY  
CREDIT**

**Walter H Brown**

*Leake County*

**\$500**

**ELECTRICITY  
CREDIT**

**Larry Freeman**

*Rankin County*

**William Willis**

*Newton County*

**C.R. and Lean Sibley**

*Leake County*



The elected board of directors are Hanna Watson, Neshoba County; David Boyd, Rankin County; and Pettey Leach, Scott County.

A crowd of more than 300 people attended the

## 2025 ANNUAL MEETING



Jason Runnels & family (gospel group)







Brian Long, general manager, delivers the annual report and praises Central Electric staff for a job well done.



Accentcare provided a health fair for our members



Chance Sistrunk, electrical engineer, shares energy efficiency information with members.



Mayor Laurie Henderson welcomed the crowd to Carthage while complimenting Central Electric on community involvement.



Mrs. Walter H. Brown was the lucky winner of the \$1,500 grand prize electricity credit.



Amy Tate, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) southwest region executive leader, provided TVA updates to the members.



# “MOVE OVER” TO PROTECT ROADSIDE CREWS

by Scott Flood

When lineworkers are perched in a bucket truck, repairing power lines along a busy road, they have good reason to be concerned about their safety. However, most are less apprehensive about problems like working with high voltages or falling. Their biggest worry is also the most unpredictable: a distracted driver slamming into their vehicle or a nearby power pole.

The National Safety Council reported that 891 people were killed and 37,701 people were injured in work zone crashes during 2022 (the most recent statistics). Most of those crashes occur in construction sites, which are usually well-marked. Electric co-op crews are likely to face even greater danger, as they are often working alone along remote stretches of roads, frequently in heavy rain or other adverse weather conditions that can reduce their visibility.

The danger of work zone crashes led every state to adopt “move over” laws that require drivers to lower their speed and switch lanes when possible to protect emergency vehicles. The goal is to provide an added safety buffer and minimize the potential for accidents. Drivers caught violating the laws can face penalties, such as significant fines.

Compounding this issue is the dramatic increase in distracted driving. The National Transportation Highway Safety Administration has reported that as many as 1,000 Americans are injured each day because of activities that take drivers’ attention away from the road. The most common is reading and responding to text messages. If a driver traveling at 55 miles per hour glances at their phone for just five seconds, they’ll have traveled the length of a football field before returning their gaze to the road.

The design of today’s vehicles contributes to distraction. Many vehicles have complex controls for entertainment and climate that demand the driver take their eyes off the road to make even simple adjustments.

Geography can also be a factor. Co-ops serving rural and remote areas often have power lines along twisty and hilly roads. Locals accustomed to driving those roads at fairly high speeds may be startled and have little time to react when they encounter a work crew past a hill or around a curve.

Besides the potential for lineworker injuries, accidents can also damage or destroy expensive service vehicles, reducing a co-op’s ability to respond to outages and other problems. Power poles and other infrastructure may also suffer severe damage.

Additionally, many of the tasks performed by lineworkers, such as reconnecting high-voltage power lines, are inherently dangerous and require their complete focus. When their attention is distracted by speeding or noisy vehicles, they’re more likely to make mistakes that can complicate the repair or cause injury.

Nor are co-op employees at risk only when their vehicles are parked and repairs are underway. Lineworkers frequently have to drive slowly along the shoulder of roads to pinpoint broken power lines or failed

transformers, especially in darkness or conditions that interfere with visibility.

Many state transportation agencies have work zone awareness programs. Amplifying those efforts by devoting part of a co-op’s advertising, publicity, and social media reminds co-op members and other drivers of the importance of giving lineworkers a wide berth.

Co-ops are considering ways they can modify bucket trucks and other service vehicles to make them more visible. Bright colors and additional lighting such as flashing strobe lights and lighted detour arrows can attract attention from a distance. Reflective “work zone ahead” signs can also alert drivers to be ready for an unusual situation. Sometimes, a little bit of extra attention is all that’s needed to prevent a serious incident.

*For more than four decades, business writer Scott Flood has worked with electric cooperatives to build knowledge of energy-related issues among directors, staff and members.*

## MISSISSIPPI’S “MOVE OVER” LAW

Mississippi’s “Move Over” law was passed to safeguard law enforcement, fire, highway construction workers, and utility crews and vehicles.

According to the law, motorists passing a utility vehicle must slow down and yield the right-of-way by changing lanes, keeping at least one empty lane where possible. If a lane change is impossible, a driver must slow down and be prepared to stop.

Violators may be fined up to \$250 for failing to comply and up to \$1,000 if there is damage to the official vehicle or injury to any driver or passenger of an official vehicle.



Besides the potential for lineworker injuries, roadside accidents can also damage or destroy expensive service vehicles, reducing a co-op’s ability to respond to outages and other problems.