

Make Storm Safety a Priority

Know what to do during lightning, ash floods and when power lines are down



Wyatt Stahl likes to dress up like his grandpa, Rusty Sherman, Graham County Electric Cooperative's assistant lineman superintendent—one of the people responsible for restoring power after an outage.

Photo by Rusty Sherman

Electrical safety during and after storms are a priority for electric companies throughout the country. Like the recent storms in Texas, Arizona can have a number of flash floods, lightning strikes, downed power lines and power outages.

Graham County Electric Cooperative prepares each year with your safety in mind by training our linemen and scheduling two on-call crews for quick response during the monsoon season.

You also can prepare for storms—whether in your home or elsewhere—with an eye toward electrical safety.

Outside During a Lightning Storm

What if a lightning storm strikes while you are outside?

- Move to a low point. Go to a ditch, if possible.
- Stay away from trees. Lightning hits the tallest available object, so get down low in a crouched position if you are in an exposed area.
- Avoid metal. Do not hold on to metal items such as golf clubs, tools, bats or fishing rods. Stay away from clotheslines, poles, fences and metal sheds.
- Stay away from water, including pools, lakes, puddles or damp areas, such as grass.

Inside During a Lightning Storm

Observe the following safety tips if you notice lightning while you are inside:

- Avoid contact with water and plumbing, including sinks, baths and faucets.
- Stay away from windows and outer doors. Lightning can strike even inside the house.
- If possible, unplug electronic equipment before the storm arrives. However, avoid contact with electrical equipment and cords during the storm.

- Use corded telephones only for emergencies.

Stay In Your Car During Lightning

If there is lightning outside while you are driving in your car:

- Do not leave your vehicle during a thunderstorm. A vehicle is considered safe during a storm if it is fully enclosed with a metal top such as a hard-top car, minivan, bus, truck, etc.
- While inside a safe vehicle, do not use electronic devices such as radio communications. If possible, lower the antenna of your radio.
- Remember that flash floods are common in the dry deserts of Arizona. They often happen quickly and sometimes without visible signs of rain.

Do's and Don'ts During a Flash Flood

Be prepared for flash floods:

- Listen to the radio or television for information in your area.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, washes and other areas known to flood suddenly. Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams, rivers or creeks during threatening conditions.
- If you are outside, move to higher ground.
- If you are in your home and feel you are in danger, do not wait for instructions to move. If you evacuate your home, turn off utilities at the main switches or valves and disconnect electrical appliances. However, do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
- Do not walk through moving water. Just six inches of moving water can make you fall.
- Do not drive into flooded areas or if a road is covered with running water. You do not know how stable the roadway



If a power line comes down on your vehicle, stay inside unless it is unsafe to do so, such as in the event of fire. If you must get out, be cautious and avoid becoming a path for the electricity to the ground.

is under the moving water, and the car could be swept away with you inside.

Caution Near Downed Power Lines

If you encounter a downed power line:

- Call 911 immediately to report a fallen power line.
- Never assume the power line is de-energized. Even though it may be on the ground or other equipment, electricity still may be flowing.
- Never touch a downed power line or anything touching the wire.
- Do not touch anyone in contact with a fallen power line or other equipment.
- Do not drive over a fallen line.

Additional Power Line Safety

If a power line falls onto your car or you failed to see a downed line and drive onto it, take these steps:

- If you are in your car and it is in contact with the downed line, stay in your car. Warn others to stay away.
- If you must leave your car because it is on fire, jump out of the vehicle with both feet together and avoid contact with the “live” car and the ground at the same time. You must avoid being the path of electricity from the car to the ground. Shuffle away from the car.

GCEC wants you to be safe during summer storms and will do everything within its power to keep the lights on.

Prepare an Outage Kit

Despite your utility's best efforts to keep your power on, Mother Nature sometimes has the last word.

Weather can wreak havoc on the power system, toppling poles, bringing down lines and leaving customers without electricity.

To better cope, make sure your home is equipped with a power outage kit. It should include:

- ▶ A flashlight and extra batteries.
- ▶ Candles and matches.
- ▶ A battery-powered radio.
- ▶ Emergency phone numbers for your utility, doctor, fire department and police.
- ▶ A telephone connected directly to the phone jack. Cordless phones and phones with answering machines require electricity.
- ▶ A first-aid kit and an ample supply of all medications you regularly use.
- ▶ Extra blankets, sleeping bags and warm clothes.
- ▶ At least one gallon of drinking water for each person per day.
- ▶ A manual can opener and nonperishable food. Canned or instant food and freeze-dried meals are good to have on hand, but often require hot water and/or a source of heat to prepare (a camp stove and fuel may be handy, but be sure to use it outdoors). Breakfast bars, crackers, peanut butter, and canned or dried fruit require no preparation. Don't forget paper plates.
- ▶ A cooler for storing frequently used foods. Food will keep several hours in a closed refrigerator and up to two days in the freezer. It will spoil more quickly if the door is opened or the refrigerator or freezer isn't full.
- ▶ Firewood and kindling if you have a woodstove or fireplace.

