



# [Echoes of the Empire]

Energy Experts Working for You

## THE SERIOUS SIDE OF SAFETY

BY BOBBE JONES || MEMBER SERVICES MANAGER

“Safety” has many different meanings; it’s used to describe a football play, it’s a device on a weapon or machine and even the name of a billiard shot. Safety is a universal term and interpreted with varying degrees of seriousness depending on the situation. Unfortunately, when it comes to keeping athletes, the public, workers and loved ones safe, steps are often ignored in the interest of haste, convenience or saving money.

However, when it comes to Empire Electric Association and electricity, safety is treated seriously. For us, safety means the state of not being exposed to danger. Our safety culture is in full force and a priority at the co-op. Over many years, a culture of safety has been established that puts our employees’ safety and that of the community above all else.

Our mission is to safely, responsibly and reliably meet the electrical energy needs of our member-owners. At the end of the day, we strive to deliver affordable and reliable electricity, but equally important, we want our work crews to return home safely to their loved ones. To do this requires ongoing focus, dedication and vigilance.

There are precise practices our line-men follow when dealing with electricity. We have safety committees that meet regularly to discuss upcoming projects from a safety perspective. Empire’s operations department hosts monthly safety and training meetings to keep employees focused on their safety and the community’s safety. Near-miss accidents are monitored and tracked to help understand them, and the lessons learned are shared to improve future procedures.

Crew members are encouraged to speak up and hold each other accountable for safety. By cultivating a culture of openness and transparency, we promote problem-solving regarding safety, rather than defaulting to a blame game. We examine the information and data collected from near-misses and accident reports to spot patterns and use safety metrics to improve in those areas where we have fallen short.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International ([www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org)) created National Electrical Safety Month and promotes it each May. According to ESFI, each year thousands of people in the United States are critically injured and electrocuted re-

sulting from electrical fires, accidents and electrocution in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable.

Because we live and work in the community we serve, we care about our neighbors and offer electrical safety information on our website at [www.eea.coop](http://www.eea.coop). We also offer electrical safety demonstrations for the classroom, at community events and for first responders. If you would like to schedule a safety demonstration, please contact our office at 970-565-4444.

There is a lot you can do to keep yourself and your community safe around electricity. Be mindful when it comes to electrical safety and remember, Empire can help you plug into electrical safety.

### MY CO-OP EMPLOYEES

Safe Electricity honored two Empire Electric employees as “Safety Superstars” in March 2018 on its website at [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org). Safe Electricity provides materials to electric co-ops to help educate consumers and co-workers about electrical safety.

Andy Carter, energy management advisor, and Jules Bitsilly, safety and compliance administrator, were recognized for their efforts toward utility worker safety. In July 2017, Andy wrote “Safety Makes Sense” in the “Echoes of the Empire” section of *Colorado Country Life* magazine.

Andy shared Empire’s mission to make safety a priority, and wrote, “Emphasizing safety benefits all of us at Empire ... in a variety of ways. First and foremost is the protection of our employees.”

The emphasis on staff safety has carry-over to Empire members, Andy said. “The

way Empire Electric employees work and the way we install our system has a direct impact on the safety of our members.”

Jules shared that all employees attend a monthly safety training, specific to their jobs.

“We reduce the number of outages we have,” Andy wrote. “It also makes it easier for us to repair problems when they occur.”

The carry-over from internal safety to public safety isn’t the only way Empire reaches the community; public safety is also given priority throughout “Echoes of the Empire,” as demonstrated with multiple Safe Electricity graphics. Members not only benefit from a safe, well-maintained and well-operated electrical system, they also benefit from Empire’s efforts in public education. They can learn enough about electrical safety to report any unsafe conditions they may see.

## CO-OP PHOTO CONTEST WINNER



*Sunflower by Terra White*

## CO-OP CALENDAR

### MAY 11, 2018 –

The Empire Board of Directors meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. at its headquarters in Cortez. The agenda is posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at [www.eea.coop](http://www.eea.coop). Members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

### MAY 13, 2018 – Mother's Day

### MAY 19, 2018 – Armed Forces Day

### MAY 28, 2018 – Memorial Day – office closed

## MY CO-OP EMPLOYEES



**Ginny Johnson**

Congratulations to two employees on their recent promotions. Chris Snyder, who started, with Empire Electric on January 9, 2017, as the human resources coordinator, accepted the position of corporate operations manager and will assume his new duties on May 29, 2018. Ginny Johnson started on March 17, 2014, in a part-time position as staff secretary, moving to a full-time position as accountant and accepting the finance manager position on March 17, 2018.



**Chris Snyder**

Dwayne Garchar announced his retirement after 45 years at Empire Electric. Dwayne started as a lineman on May 14, 1973, and will leave as a foreman on May 14, 2018. Dwayne is affectionately call "Garch" and holds the record for the longest continuous service of any employee in the history of Empire.



**Dwayne Garchar**

We are grateful for his many years of dedicated service to our members in the Dove Creek and Monticello service territories.

## MY CO-OP ADVANTAGE

Each year, Empire Electric offers scholarships to any member or dependent of a member who has been awarded a scholarship from Empire Electric. Those previous scholarship winners may reapply for this continuing education scholarship one time per year for three additional years. The deadline for this scholarship is June 15, 2018. For more information, please email the executive secretary at [eea.coop](mailto:info@eea.coop) or call 970-564-4441. Utah residents may call 800-709-3726 ext. 441.

## UPDATED WEBSITE

Empire launched a new version of its website. It provides easier maneuverability and is fully responsive, adapting from your desktop, to your tablet, to a mobile device.

There are several educational videos and articles to help you learn how to manage your energy and save money. Interactive tools are easy to locate and can help you use energy more wisely in your home or business.

Be sure to check out the website at [www.eea.coop](http://www.eea.coop) and take advantage of the tools and benefits available to you as a co-op member.

# SAVE the DATE

# 14

## Empire Electric's Annual Meeting

Thursday, June 14, 2018

Registration 4:30 p.m.

Meeting 5:30 p.m.

Empire Electric Association - 801 N. Broadway, Cortez, CO

# SUMMER SAFETY

## FOR KIDS

To learn more  
about safe outdoor play visit:

**Safe  
Electricity.org**



- Fly kites in large open spaces away from overhead power lines.
- Always check trees for nearby power lines before climbing. Choose another tree if lines are close by.
- Keep long tools like pool skimmers stored and secure when not in use. They can be long enough to reach electrical lines connected to the home.
- Ensure all outdoor outlets have ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to help prevent electric shock.
- Recognize the green metal boxes in yards contain electrical equipment and are not toys.

## SHARING SPACE

BY DERRILL HOLLY

In simpler times, families spent more time together in the same room even as they pursued different interests. Some members might read books or magazines under the light of a shared lamp, while others watched television or played board games.

Today it's common for everyone to retreat to separate spaces, turn on their electronics, adjust their ceiling fans or window unit air conditioners and close their doors to cocoon in their own environments.

Getting control of your energy use to reduce your home's overall demand can be really challenging when you have to consider the entire home, so bring back family time to beat the peak.

LCD televisions generally use 60 percent as much electricity as comparably sized plasma models. One laptop computer uses about 20 percent as much power as a desktop computer and monitor. And today's home assistant devices can play music using about 17 percent of the energy of a component stereo system.

A video game console consumes about 200 watts of power. One system pressed into service for spirited intramural competition between family members in one room uses about a third of the power of three players engaged in online games around the house.

Finish the space with energy-efficient LED fixtures for lighting, a couple sets of headphones and a few rechargeable power boosters for the family's handheld devices. You'll have a cool and fun place to spend a few hours with the family.

*Derrill Holly writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

Submit your 2 favorite photos for  
Empire Electric's Annual Photo Contest



Entry forms and  
photo upload  
available at  
[www.eea.coop](http://www.eea.coop)

Contest entries are due July 2, 2018.

## May is National Electrical Safety Month

This month, we encourage  
all members to take extra  
time to plug into safety.

## #ElectricalSafetyMonth

## WHAT TO DO DURING AN ELECTRICAL OUTAGE

Providing safe, reliable electricity to Empire's members is an ongoing challenge when storm-related weather or an accident can disrupt the electricity we are so used to having. Sometimes electricity flickers momentarily and will then return, but serious damage to power lines and the electrical grid can cause outages for days or weeks. Below is some valuable information to help keep you safe and comfortable during a power outage of any length. More information regarding seasonal outages is available at [www.eea.coop](http://www.eea.coop) in the Safety section.

### SHORT-TERM POWER FAILURES

Don't panic. Check to see if your neighbors still have electricity. If they do, the problem could be inside your home. Check your main fuses or circuit breakers to see if they have blown or tripped.

If the problem is not in your home, call us at Empire's main number 970-565-4444. A crew will be dispatched as quickly as possible. We will let you know if it will be an extended outage.

Unplug appliances with electronic components, such as microwaves, televisions and computers. This will help eliminate damage to your appliances from voltage surges when the electricity is restored. Wait a few minutes before turning on these appliances when the electricity is restored. This will reduce demand on the power supplier's electrical system.

### LONG-TERM POWER FAILURES

If you use a standby generator, be sure it has been installed and wired properly. If improperly installed, a generator could cause dangerous conditions for utility employees working to restore power. Your generator could be damaged when the power is restored if a double throw disconnect is not used and properly installed. It is also important to be sure that a fresh supply of fuel to power the generator is on hand and properly stored.

To make an outage easier to cope with, keep an adequate supply of the following on hand. These should be kept in a cool, dry place and all members of the family should know where to find them.

- Flashlights with fresh batteries
- Battery-operated radio
- Candles and matches
- Extra supply of batteries for flashlights and radio
- Basic first aid supplies
- A small supply of drinking water and food
- Baby supplies if an infant is in the home

Check the basement periodically for flooding. You can use a portable, gasoline-powered pump to pump out a basement or crawl space when the power is interrupted to an electric sump pump. Never wade into a flooded basement unless electricity supplying sump pumps, freezers or other items have been disconnected. The power may be restored while you are in the flooded basement and the motors on these appliances may be submerged.

Never go near downed power lines; call Empire's main number at 970-565-4444 and let qualified people handle these situations.



### EXTENDED POWER OUTAGE

Unplug everything in your home. Turn off breakers or remove fuses. If there is an extended power outage, you may want to leave one lighting circuit on so you know when the electricity comes back on.

Winterize your water supply system completely. Be sure to disconnect the electrical supply to the water heater before draining. If the power is not off, there can be damage to the elements of the heater when the power returns. Drain the water system from the lowest possible point so there will be as little water as possible left in the pipes. If your hot water heating system is filled with a nonfreezing solution, call your dealer or installer for advice.

The drainage system in the home also needs to be winterized. This is done by pouring antifreeze into the traps in the drains below sinks, toilets, washing machines, etc. Recreational vehicle antifreeze is recommended, because it is less toxic.

Empty all food from freezers and refrigerators, and leave doors open. The food could be taken to neighbors who have electricity or to a food locker. Dry ice could also be used for a short period of time. The easiest solution may be to take the food outside if the temperature is cold enough.

If your home is equipped with an electric heat pump, special care is needed when turning the unit on after an extended outage. It takes time for the lubricant in the refrigerant to warm up. This is approximately one and one-half hours per ton of cooling capacity. This could vary from brand to brand and a call to your dealer could prevent problems. During this compressor warm-up time, you should use the supplemental or emergency resistance heating elements of the heat pump to heat the home.

Keep curtains closed except on south-facing windows in the winter when the sun is shining. This will supply some passive solar heat in the daytime hours. Draperies should always be closed at night.

Following these suggestions will make it easier to cope with a power outage. Think ahead and be prepared for an emergency by having a plan for your household. Remember to stay calm. The electricity will be back on as quickly as possible. Empire Electric will be working around the clock to restore your service.