



## Season's Greetings

From the Directors and Employees of Shelby Electric Cooperative, Shelby Energy and PWR-net Wireless Internet.

## How to Care for Your Farm-Grown Fresh Christmas Tree

When a Christmas tree is cut, over half of its weight is water. With proper care, you can maintain the quality of your displayed trees. Below are tips relating to the care of displayed trees:

- Displaying trees in water in a traditional reservoir type stand is the most effective way of maintaining their freshness and minimizing needle loss problems.
- Make a fresh cut to remove about a 1/2-inch thick disk of wood from the base of the trunk before putting the tree in the stand. Make the cut perpendicular to the stem axis. Don't cut the trunk at an angle, or into a v-shape, which makes it far more difficult to hold the tree in the stand and also reduces the amount of water available to the tree.
- Once home, place the tree in water as soon as possible. Most species can go 6 to 8 hours after cutting the trunk and still absorb water. Don't bruise the cut surface or get it dirty.
- If needed, trees can be tempo-

rarily stored for several days in a cool location. Place the freshly cut trunk in a bucket that is kept full of water.

- To display the trees indoors, use a stand with an adequate water holding capacity for the tree. As a general rule, stands should provide 1 quart of water per inch of stem diameter. Devices are available that help maintain a constant water level in the stand.
- Use a stand that fits your tree. Avoid whitening the sides of the trunk down to fit a stand. The outer layers of wood are the most efficient in absorbing water and should not be removed.
- Keep displayed trees away from sources of heat (fireplaces, heaters, heat vents and direct sunlight). Lowering the room temperature will slow the dry-



ing process, resulting in less water consumption each day.

- The temperature of the water used to fill the stand is not important and does not affect water uptake.
- Check the stand daily to make

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► *Continued from 16a*

sure that the level of water does not go below the base of the tree. With many stands, there can still be water in the stand even though the base of the tree is no longer submerged in water.

- Drilling a hole in the base of the trunk does not improve water uptake.
- Use of lights that produce low heat, such as miniature or LED lights, will reduce drying of the tree.
- Always inspect light sets prior to placing them on the tree. If a string of lights is damaged, replace with a new set.
- Do not overload electrical circuits.
- Always turn off the tree lights when leaving the house or when going to bed.
- Monitor the tree for freshness. After Christmas or if the tree is dry, remove it from the house.
- Go to [www.realchristmastrees.org](http://www.realchristmastrees.org) and type in your ZIP code to find a recycling program near you.
- Never burn any part of a Christmas tree in a wood stove or fireplace.
- To learn more about Christmas trees go to [www.christmastree.org](http://www.christmastree.org), home of the National Christmas Tree Association.

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**Shelbyville, IL 62565**  
**Phone: 217-774-3986**  
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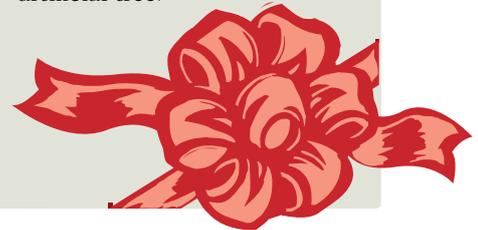
**Office Hours:**  
**7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

## Bet You Didn't Know This

- According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), approximately one tenth of one percent (0.12%) of residential fires involves a Christmas tree – both real and artificial.
- At NO time can a real Christmas tree START or CAUSE a fire. Christmas trees do not spontaneously combust.
- In 1998 more than 32 million real Christmas trees were used in the U.S. Of these, only 0.00093% were ignited in home fires.
- Christmas trees are not as likely to be the first item ignited in residential fires as many other common household items:
  - newspapers and magazines – 13 times more likely
  - boxes or bags – 10 times more likely
  - curtains or drapes – 9 times more likely
- Overloaded electric outlets and faulty wires are the most common causes of holiday fires in residences. These types of fires can be just as dangerous with an artificial tree.



### Energy Efficiency

### *Tip of the Month*

Turn off kitchen, bath, and other exhaust fans within 20 minutes after you are done cooking or bathing. When replacing exhaust fans, consider installing high-efficiency, low-noise models.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

#### LINE OUTAGES

DATE	HOURS	SUBSTATION	CAUSE	MEMBERS AFFECTED
10/6/2009	5.05	Moweaqua	Bad arresstor	78
10/19/2009	1.45	Moweaqua	Miscellaneous	93
10/22/2009	1.05	Lakewood	Unknown	156
10/25/2009	1.30	Shelbyville	Animal/bird	57

#### SUBSTATION OUTAGES

DATE	HOURS	SUBSTATION	CAUSE	MEMBERS AFFECTED
10/22/2009	1.30	Richland	Equipment failure	588



## Don't Let This Happen To You

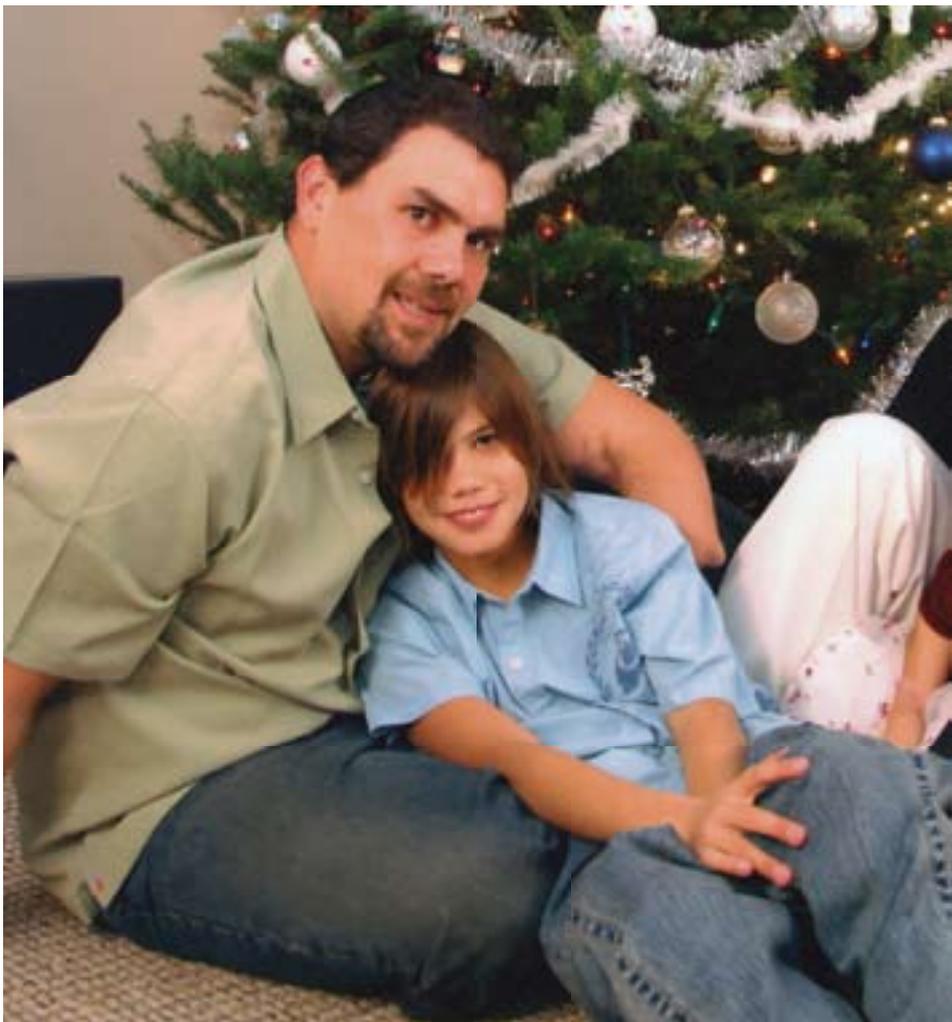
For millions of people every year, the holiday season comes with traditions of festive lights and decorations, extraordinary foods and lavish parties. Unfortunately, time-honored traditions can easily end in tragedy if precautions are not taken. A few years ago, Shawn Miller was one of these people.

His mother, Maria Worth, found her son on the ground with wisps of smoke coming from his body. Miller was unconscious and badly burned. He had been hanging holiday lights in the trees that lined her yard. As he tossed the lights up into the trees, 7200 volts of electricity entered his body, traveling from the overhead power lines through his strand of lights.

“Power lines were the last thing on my mind that day,” says Miller. “I was just hanging Christmas lights at my Mom’s house like I do every year, only this time, I was decorating a new area, the trees that lined the front of the yard.”

Although Miller suffered 27 exit wounds, the loss of his left hand and a finger on his right hand, his survival was miraculous. He urges everyone to use caution this holiday season. Miller’s experience is the centerpiece of this year’s Safe Electricity’s Teach Learn Care TLC campaign, spreading awareness about the importance of electrical safety.

“Shawn Miller has a lot to teach us about electrical safety and we are grateful he is sharing his story through our Teach Learn Care TLC campaign,” says Molly Hall, Executive Director of Safe Electricity. “We want people to learn from his tragic experience and care enough to share it with those they love.”



*Electrocution survivor Shawn Miller and his family.*

“I’m lucky to be alive,” Miller adds. “I want everyone to be careful and be aware of power lines.”

Miller and Safe Electricity urge everyone to follow these guidelines while decorating for the holiday season:

- Never throw holiday lights or other decorations into trees near power lines.
- Be especially careful when working near power lines at-

tached to your house. Keep ladders, equipment and yourself at least 10 feet from all power lines.

- Use only lights that have been safety tested and have the UL label.
- Before use, check each light string for broken sockets, frayed cord or faulty plugs. Replace damaged strings and always unplug light strings while replacing bulbs.



- Make sure extension cords are in good condition, are UL-approved and rated to carry the electrical load you will connect to them.
- Match plugs with outlets. Don't force a 3-pronged plug into a 2-pronged outlet or extension cord.
- Do not overload outlets. Use surge protector strips if multiple outlets are needed.
- Keep electric cords away from high-traffic areas and don't run them through doorways or hide them under rugs or carpets.
- Don't let children or pets play with light strings or electrical decorations.
- Place fresh-cut trees away from heat sources, such as heat registers, fireplaces, radiators and televisions; and water frequently.
- Always unplug lights before going to bed or leaving your home.

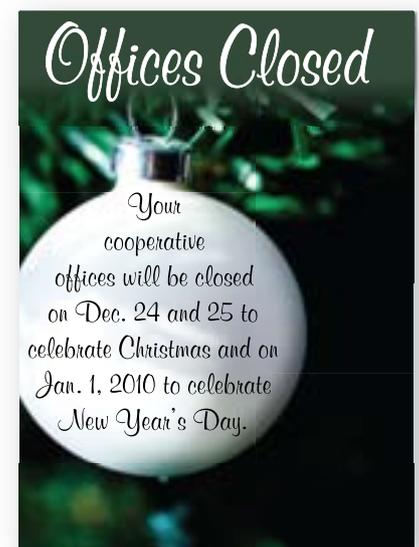
"After something life-changing happens, you become more interested and learn much more," Miller said. "Had I known more before this happened, I might still have two hands and the job I loved. I have to find ways to move on with my life and help people learn from what has happened to me. Safe Electricity is helping me help others."

For more information on electrical safety and to see a video on Shawn's compelling story, visit [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org).

- Outdoors, use only lights, cords, animated displays and decorations rated for outdoor use. Cords should be plugged into outlets equipped with GFCIs. Use a portable GFCI if your outdoor outlets are not equipped with them.
- Do not staple or nail through light strings or electrical cords, or attach cords to utility poles
- Don't string together more than three standard-size sets of lights.

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# Safety Concerns on New Device – Buyer Beware

Looking at its Web site you can see why people might be attracted to the RPU-190, <http://www.reducepowerusage.com>.

“Cut your power bill by 50 percent,” it blares atop the home page. The manufacturer of the \$199 device goes on to claim that it uses “genuine power-saving techniques” and that “if you can plug in a power cord, you can install the RPU-190.”

To consumer-members it might sound impressive; but Brian Sloboda, a program manager at the Cooperative Research Network, has another opinion. “I call it a potential deathtrap,” he said. “This could kill you.”

CRN and some local co-op engineers have been taking a look at the RPU-190, which Sloboda described as a shunt that’s slightly larger than a stick of chewing gum.

“All it is, is a strip of copper that you place between the contacts on the meter base,” he explained. “Shunting means it sends the electricity around, so it’s never counted — assuming it works, which could be illegal.”

Following co-op complaints, Electric Hero, the manufacturer of the RPU-190, removed from its Web site a video that Sloboda called “scary.” In it, a young wom-

an demonstrated how to install the device.

Dressed in shorts and a T-shirt and wearing what appear to be lineman’s gloves, she opens a meter, sticks the copper strip in and closes the meter. “There is the potential for serious harm,” Sloboda said, expressing amazement that the woman was not injured or killed.

Electric Co-op Today made phone and e-mail requests for an interview with an Electric Hero official.

The e-mail was not replied to, and a man answering the phone said the owner, whom he would identify only as “Mike,” would call back. That had not happened at press time.

However, J.P. Daniels, who works in sales and marketing for Electric Hero, told CRN that the company was being “harassed” over the device. “It’s not illegal, it’s not cheating, it’s not stealing and it’s not bypassing anything,” Daniels said. Sloboda noted that the company claims it will halt sales if shown that the RPU-190 is illegal.

That has failed to happen even though several co-ops pointed to laws against meter tampering. While the RPU-190 itself may not be illegal, the primary use of it is.

The Missouri Public Service

Commission alerted utilities to the RPU-190 and encouraged them to sound the alarm. At the statewide association, Rural Missouri magazine decided to see for itself.

Editor Jim McCarty said that for their \$199, they received a package with a Florida postmark and not a whole lot of other identifying information.

Inside was what McCarty described as a “crude” DVD showing how to install the device. “It had words misspelled,” he said. “The name of the utility on the meter was taped over.” CRN is developing an article for statewide magazines to warn of the hazards of the RPU-190.

“They’re selling well-meaning people a device that they advertise as bringing energy efficiency to your home, and people are risking their lives and they’re potentially violating the law,” Sloboda said.

“You’re just wasting your money and you could have spent that money on actual energy efficiency improvements and worked collaboratively with your utility, rather than trying to circumvent the utility.”

*(Reprinted from Electric Co-op Today - Mar. 27, 2009 written by Michael W. Kahn)*

<p>Shelby Electric Cooperative 1-800-677-2612 1-217-774-3986 24-hours-a-day</p>	<p>PWR-net &amp; WildBlue Internet 1-877-994-2323 weekdays</p>	<p>Shelby Energy 1-217-774-2311 24-hours-a-day</p>
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# REAL LIFE REAL POWER

## Refrigerate Responsibly

Holidays and food go together like turkey and dressing. For safe food storage, it is important to know at what temperatures your refrigerator and freezer are operating. According to the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, refrigerators should maintain a temperature of 40 F or below and freezers should maintain zero degrees F. An appliance thermometer will allow you to monitor the temperature of your refrigerator/freezer. This can be particularly beneficial in the event of a power outage. When power is restored, if the refrigerator temperature is still at 40 F, the food is considered safe. Foods that have been above 40 F for more than two hours should not be consumed.

Proper refrigerator and freezer maintenance will also help save energy and money by allowing your appliance to work in optimum conditions. Use this simple checklist for your refrigerator/freezer:

- Check the seal. Put a dollar bill in various places around the refrigerator door. If you can pull it out easily – the seal is not tight (and you are wasting energy and money!).
- Clean the coils. Coils make a cozy home for dust bunnies! Dirty coils make the unit's compressor work longer to remove heat.
- Setting the freezer temperature below zero degrees F uses extra energy.
- Setting the refrigerator temperature below 37 F uses extra energy.

### FREE

**Shelby Electric Cooperative wants to help you keep your food safe and save energy by providing a free refrigerator/freezer thermometer (one per member, while supplies last). Stop in the office at North Route 128 to pick up your thermometer.**



## Ghost, Goblins and Ghouls, Oh My!

Shelby Electric Cooperative's Spooktacular III ended with great success and there are plans for a Spooktacular IV. Young and old enjoyed two mazes, one for the faint of heart and one for those who like a bit of a spook and a thrill. Once they made it out alive kids were handed a bag of treats.

"We opened for two nights this year and we had great crowds both nights with Halloween night being the largest crowd as we expected," said cooperative organizers. "It was a great way for the inside employees and the outside employees to work together on a great community event," continued the event coordinators.

Over 960 people ventured through the two mazes with 536 of them being youngsters, many of them in costumes as well.

One person who ventured into the



*Cast of spooks and characters who were part of the cooperative's Spooktacular III haunted maze. Over 600 bags of treats were handed out during the two-night event.*

haunted maze commented on how well the coop employees are able to keep it fresh each year and the kids loved hanging out with Spiderman and Scooby Doo.

Spooktacular is put on by the employees and family members of Shelby Electric Cooperative and is a free, safe, trick-or-treat community event.

# AUTOMATIC HOME STANDBY GENERATORS



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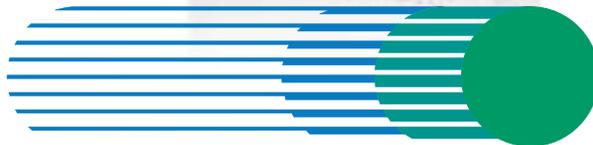
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