

REA Energy Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



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Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Closed Tuesday and Thursday

Safety Starts Before the Storm



STACY HILLIARD

BY THE TIME SPRING ARRIVES, many of us are ready to welcome longer days, warmer weather and the chance to get back outside. But at electric cooperatives across the country, spring also signals the beginning of severe weather season, bringing heavy rain, strong winds, flooding and even late-season snowstorms that challenge our electric grid and communities.

For employees of REA Energy, safety is more than a priority — it is a responsibility. Our crews train consistently to respond to storms quickly and safely, often working long hours in difficult and hazardous conditions to restore power. Yet no matter how prepared our teams are, the most effective storm response is one that begins before the weather rolls in.

Preparation starts with awareness. Spring storms can develop rapidly, creating risks not only for utility workers but also for members at home. Something as simple as knowing where to go for outage updates or having a flashlight ready can make a meaningful difference when the power goes out unexpectedly. Refer to the article on page 16B for emergency preparedness tips.

At REA Energy, we invest time and resources into planning for severe weather. We review response procedures and monitor forecasts closely so we can act quickly when needed. This proactive approach protects our employees and may help reduce restoration time for our members. But preparedness is not something we do alone; it's a shared effort between the cooperative and the communities we serve.

Electrical safety is especially critical during and after storms. Downed power lines should always be treated as if they are energized. If you see one, keep your distance and report it immediately. Never attempt to remove tree limbs from lines or move a downed line. Our trained professionals are prepared to handle those situations safely.

Spring is a good time to take a walk around your property, too. Look for trees or branches that could pose a risk to service lines and notify the cooperative if you see potential hazards near our equipment. Staying alert and reporting concerns early can help prevent outages and accidents before storms arrive.

At its core, the cooperative model is about people helping people. During storm restoration, that spirit shines through — not only in the dedication of our crews, but also in the patience, support and cooperation shown by our members. When we all stay informed, prepared and focused on safety, we strengthen our entire community.

Spring storms may be unpredictable, but our commitment to safety is not. Together, by preparing ahead of time and looking out for one another, we can weather the season with confidence while knowing we are ready, resilient, and prepared to power through whatever comes our way. 🌩️

STACY HILLIARD, CCC, CKAE
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

When Storms Strike: Stay Safe with a Family Emergency Plan

KAYLA KING, CCC, MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

IT'S NEVER FUN to think about potential emergencies. Most of us would rather imagine sunny days and normal routines rather than think about storms, power outages, or other emergencies. But the truth is simple: Preparation now can make a big difference later.

Emergencies are unpredictable, and when they occur, seconds may matter. Creating a plan for your family and practicing it will help everyone stay safe and calm.

The goal is not to worry; it's to prepare. When you are prepared, you don't feel vulnerable. Instead, you know what to do, where to go and who to contact. That peace of mind is worth the effort.

Before an emergency

Start with a clear conversation. Make sure everyone in your family knows who to contact first, where to meet if you can't stay at home, how to escape safely during a fire or a storm, and what to do if you are unable to use your cellphones.

Choose someone who lives outside your immediate area as your point of contact. If your group separates, everyone should check in with this person. Sometimes, text messages can be successfully sent even when phone calls do not connect.

Teach your young children their full name, home address and your phone number. If they have their own phone, add a contact called ICE (In Case of Emergency). First responders are trained to look for this.

Education and practice

Different emergencies require different actions. Spend time planning for each of the following:

- ▶ **Fire:** Draw escape routes from every room. Practice twice a year.
- ▶ **Tornadoes or high winds:** Identify the lowest and most interior room in your house, such as a basement, hallway or interior bathroom.
- ▶ **Flooding:** Know where higher ground is nearby. Never try to drive through floodwater.
- ▶ **Severe storms:** Discuss what to do if the power goes out for hours or days.

Young children learn best by practicing. Make planning a drill. Walk through your home together and point out the safest places. Let them help pack the emergency kit so they know where everything is.

Prepare your home

A home that is prepared is a safer place. Here are some basics to consider:

Warning systems

Install and regularly test:

- ▶ Smoke alarms on every level of your home
- ▶ Carbon monoxide (CO) detectors, especially near sleeping areas

Replace the batteries every six months. An easy way to remember to do this is to change them when you adjust your clocks in the spring and fall.

Local alerts can provide important information about road closures, shelters and evacuation orders. Use a battery-operated weather radio or download severe weather apps for advanced storm warnings. Subscribe to text and/or email alerts from your local office of emergency management, if available.

A well-stocked emergency kit

Build a kit that can last at least five days. This should include:

- ▶ Non-perishable food
- ▶ One gallon of water per person, per day
- ▶ Food and medication for pets, if needed



- ▶ Flashlights and extra batteries
- ▶ Prescription medications
- ▶ First-aid supplies
- ▶ Blankets and warm clothing
- ▶ Phone numbers for family, neighbors, utilities and REA Energy
- ▶ Cash (ATMs and card readers may be offline)
- ▶ Copies of insurance cards and important documents

Keep your kit in a location everyone can easily access.

If someone has medical equipment, oxygen or mobility needs, have a plan for them as well.

During an emergency

Stay calm and stick to the plan.

Panic can cloud judgment. When something bad occurs, take a deep breath, think clearly and follow the plan you've practiced. Your kit, communication strategy and safe locations are ready for moments like this.

Storm safety

Storms can be frightening, but preparation helps. During severe weather:

- ▶ Stay away from windows.
- ▶ Close interior doors.
- ▶ Move to the lowest, most central part of the home.
- ▶ Have shoes, flashlights and phones nearby.

If you are driving when storms approach:

- ▶ Pull over and stop.
- ▶ Avoid trees, power lines and open areas.
- ▶ Do NOT shelter under a bridge during a tornado.
- ▶ Stay inside your vehicle if lightning is close. Remember: If you can hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike.

Power outages

Power outages often follow storms. If your power goes out:

- ▶ Report the outage to REA Energy by calling 844-920-3395 or using our SmartHub app.
- ▶ Unplug sensitive electronics to protect them from surges.
- ▶ Keep refrigerators and freezers closed as much as possible. A fully stocked freezer can keep food cold for 48 hours, if unopened.

To maintain communication:

- ▶ Keep charged power banks in your emergency kit.
- ▶ Use phones sparingly to extend battery life.
- ▶ Save battery power by turning on low-power mode and reducing screen brightness.

Generator safety

Portable generators are helpful, but they *must* be used correctly:

- ▶ NEVER run a generator inside your home or garage.
- ▶ Run only in well-ventilated areas outdoors.

- ▶ Keep at least 20 feet away from doors, windows and vents.
- ▶ Use proper extension cords.
- ▶ Refuel only when the generator is turned off and cooled.

Carbon monoxide is silent and deadly. If you use a generator, make sure you have working CO detectors.

After the emergency

Be patient and stay alert.

Even after the wind stops or the power returns, danger may still exist. Follow official instructions and do not return to an evacuated area until authorities say it's safe to do so.

When you come home

- ▶ Walk carefully through your property.
- ▶ Look and listen for gas leaks.
- ▶ Avoid standing water, which may hide debris or electrical hazards.
- ▶ Never touch a downed power line. Assume every wire is energized and dangerous. Report it immediately.

Check on neighbors

Storms and outages can be tougher for older adults, families with infants or people with medical issues. Once the danger has passed, check on your neighbors. A quick visit or phone call could make a big difference.

Take notes and improve

Once life returns to normal, review your experience:

- ▶ What worked well?
- ▶ What could be improved?
- ▶ Do any supplies need to be replaced?

Update your family plan and remember that preparation is ongoing.

Why preparation matters

No one can control when a storm rolls in or when the power goes out, but you can control how ready your family is for those things to occur. Planning transforms fear into confidence.

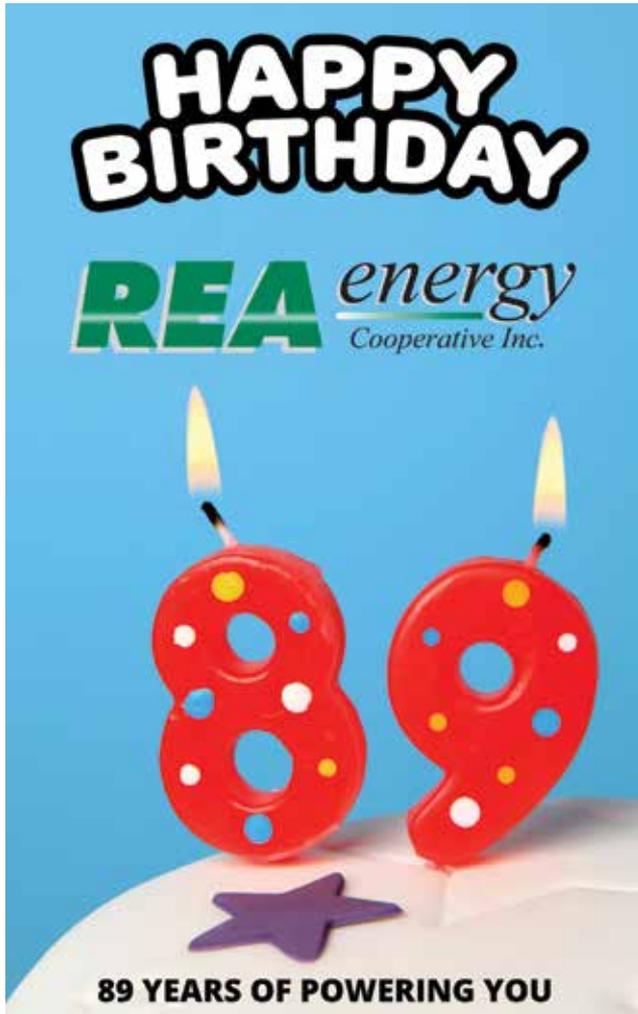
By taking a little time now to communicate, educate, and prepare, you can help protect the people and pets who matter most to you. In an emergency, small steps can save lives.

For more tips, visit:

- ▶ ready.gov
- ▶ redcross.org

Being prepared is never wasted time; it's peace of mind. 🧘

LEARN MORE WEATHER AND
OUTAGE SAFETY TIPS BY GOING TO
[WWW.REAENERGY.COM/OUTAGES](https://www.reaenergy.com/outages)



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PENNLINES

Do you or someone you know have a business or organization that is powered by REA Energy or serves REA members? We want to hear from you!

Contact reaenergy@reaenergy.com to schedule an interview to appear in Penn Lines.

Right-of-Way Management News

REA Energy contractors will complete tree trimming work in the following areas in March:
 Contractor crews from Penn Line Tree Service will be trimming the rights of way of the Amsbry substation and Reese/Wilmore substation service areas in addition to emergency maintenance areas.
 Members in affected areas will be notified. Contractors will perform all right-of-way work per REA Energy specifications. All contractor employees will carry identification cards and their vehicles will display their company name. If you have any questions, call 724-349-4800 or view the specifications at reaenergy.com.

Your Board of Directors



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