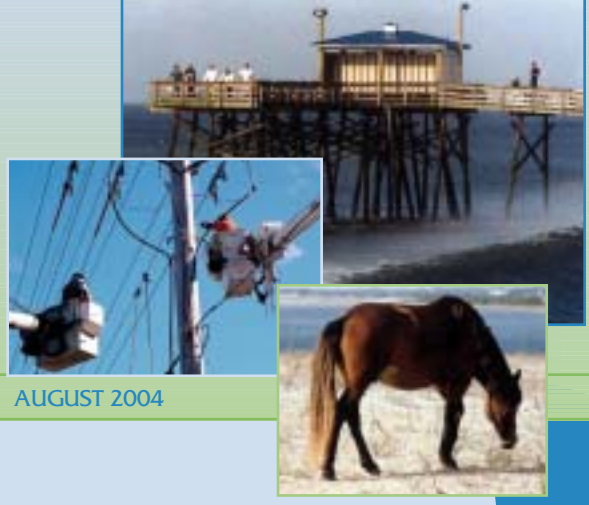
MEMBER News

From Cedar Island to Cedar Point and many places in between



A newsletter for members of Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative AUGUST 2004

carteret-craven electric cooperative

Why did my lights blink?

Technology designed to reduce damage and restoration time

One of the most frequent questions asked by CCEC members is, "Why did my lights blink?" Whether you are home or away, asleep or awake, you know it has happened because digital clocks in your home have reset and are flashing.

The blinks occur when the power line that serves your home probably experienced a brief power interruption. Those blinks are intentional and are actually increasing power reliability by allowing time for protection equipment to separate a damaged power line from the source. The blink is created by protective devices that react to faults (short circuits) on a power line.

A temporary fault on a power line will result in a quick blink and can be caused in a number of ways, including wires slapping together during a storm, a tree branch hitting a power line, a bird or animal touching an energized part and grounded part at the same time, a vehicle bumping a utility pole, or by lightning and other similar events.

If the damage to a power line is severe enough, a fault can allow a large amount of electric current to flow through the lines. Rather than allow that current to continue where it can cause further damage, CCEC has installed OCRs (oil circuit reclosers; sometimes called breakers) and fuses (fused cutouts) that detect these fault currents.

An OCR reacts to a fault by beginning a series of internal switching operations. It opens and closes a switch, as many as three times. It turns itself back on to see if the short circuit has cleared. If after a few blinks (four or less) the lights return to normal, the technology worked. On the fourth blink, if the fault is still there, the OCR will remain open and disconnect the line segment.

The problem line has been isolated from the rest of the circuit and the number and length of time customers are without power has been limited significantly. With the problem isolated, a serviceman can respond more quickly to repair the damaged line and restore power.

While it may be annoying to have to reset digital clocks and other equipment, this technology actually improves the cooperative's service reliability, safeguards the cooperative's equipment and reduces the amount of time you would be without power. To avoid the blinking alarm clock, consider buying one that has a battery backup.

on the web

Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative's "e-commerce" site is coming soon! Keep checking our Website.

Go to:
www.carteretcravenelectric.coop

Swimming pools should be clear of power lines

If you are planning to install a swimming pool to your property, where you place the pool is a concern for us at the cooperative. Pools installed too close to power lines can be deadly. When you get ready to plan for your new pool, whether it will be in the ground or above ground, call CCEC at (252) 247-3107 and let us schedule a visit by one our field representatives to discuss your plans with you. We can advise you on wiring requirements and other safety issues, too.

inside-out

Cooperative presentations fit any audience

Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative has a variety of programs suitable for young and old on topics ranging from electrical safety and storm preparedness to the cooperative business model, economic development and our wetlands restoration project.

"You can choose from some of the presentations listed here, or we can create a presentation on specific topics of interest on request," said Bill Ward, CCEC director of community relations. "I want to stress that we can customize any program to fit time constraints, specific interests or age groups."

Program topics available include the following:

It's a hair-raising experience for this young man during a electrical safety demonstration at the cooperative.

Electrical Safety

This presentation is tailored for specific ages from kindergarten through senior adults.

The program includes videos and a high-voltage demonstration. It can include information on how electricity is delivered to your home or business.

Storm Preparedness

Information covered here includes preparing for an approaching storm, generator safety and utility restoration after the storm.

A lecture and PowerPoint presentation are available, as is a 25-minute video program.

Cooperative Impact

This offering provides insight into the economic, environmental and social impact Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative has on the communities it serves.

The program includes a PowerPoint presentation and guest speaker, covering areas such as Operation RoundUP©, Bright Ideas grants and scholarships as well as taxes and fees paid by the cooperative, electrical cooperative operations, and the volunteer participation of employees.

Cooperative Business Model

Participants learn how cooperatives came into being, especially electric cooperatives, during the New Deal and the Roosevelt Administration.

The program explains differences in types of utilities, their business models and the territories they serve.

It is presented primarily to government classes in public schools, but can be used for adult civic clubs as well. A spin-off of this topic covers careers in the electric utility industry.

Bill Ward

Tours

Schools, Scouts and civic groups are welcome to tour our facilities on Highway 24 for a view and explanation of the on-site wetlands restoration project.

The vegetation along the roadside at the cooperative's property is part of a restored, man-made wetland that helps filter and clean runoff in Jumping Run Creek.

The restoration project serves as a natural classroom where school groups can come and study the flora and fauna associated with a wetland area and learn more about the environmental benefits of wetlands.

"The presentations are lively, with such features as audience participation, live demonstrations, videos, PowerPoint presentations, Q&A, and more," Ward said.

Interested groups can contact Ward at (252) 727-2251 or 1- 800-682-2217 or by e-mail at billw@ccemc.com.

Teachers learn about CCEC as part of "Leadership Carteret for Educators," a program sponsored by the Carteret County Chamber of Commerce. Tours of the facility and presentations are available to a variety of groups and cover a variety of topics.

Cooperative adopts polices to curb members' costs

Providing members with reliable electricity at the best price is our mission at Carteret-Craven Electric. Employees are constantly looking for ways to improve service and save members money, and recent studies have identified a couple of problem areas that are adding to the cost of electricity.

From 2000 through 2003, the number of bad checks received by the cooperative has grown 47 percent. If the trend continues, as it appears it will, returned checks could total as much as $180,000 by year's end.

While examining this problem, cooperative staff discovered another trend: a significant amount of bad debt is caused by those members who live on the system for less than three years, disconnect service and leave an unpaid final bill.

To protect you from this alarming increase in annual debt write-offs, the cooperative has adopted cost-saving measures that should reduce the number of returned checks and unpaid final bills, which will ultimately save you money.

Returned Checks

Changes in the cooperative's bad check policy have been adopted to better protect the vast majority of cooperative members who are conscientious.

If a member pays an electric bill or deposit with a check that is returned by the bank, the cooperative will require payment by cash, money order or credit card for the 12-month period following the returned check. A returned check fee of $25 will be charged. If payment was made with a bad check through the co-op's Website, the member will be charged an additional electronic returned item fee of $25.

If the returned check was presented as payment for a past due balance, the account may be subject to immediate disconnection, and the member will be required to pay a new or additional deposit amount before the account is reconnected.

Security Deposits

To further protect our membership from the increasing costs of bad debt write-offs, the cooperative has initiated a new security deposit policy.

For any service connected after July 1, 2004, the security deposit will be held for 36 consecutive months, accruing interest during that time. At the end of that period, the deposit may be returned if the account has established satisfactory credit. For any member who disconnects service, the deposit will be applied to the final bill.

As in the past, security deposits may be waived if a new customer provides a letter confirming acceptable credit for the most recent 12 months with any electric utility; has an acceptable score on a credit report; or has a cooperative member with good credit co-sign or guarantee payment for service.

CCEC Statement of Nondiscrimination

Carteret-Craven Electric Membership Cooperative affirms that it is an Equal Opportunity Employer (EEO) and as such agrees in all employment practices such as upgrading, layoff or termination, and selection for training, including apprenticeship, and will not discriminate against any employee or applicants for employment with regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability or veteran's status.

All employees will receive pay or other forms of compensation on a nondiscriminatory basis, including opportunities for performing overtime work or otherwise earning increased compensation.

All employment decisions will be in accordance with Equal Employment Opportunity principles using only valid requirements for selection procedures. All personnel actions will be administered without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability or veteran's status, including benefits, training, education, social, and recreational programs.

To assure the effectiveness of the Affirmative Action Program, Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative has designated Peggy Horrell, vice president of human resources and administration, as EEO officer, with responsibilities for the development, coordination, implementation and annual update of the program.

How to operate your generator safely

Having a generator during power outages can be a comfort and can keep critical appliances running in your home, but if not used properly, portable generators can kill you or the people who are restoring power.

If you connect a portable electric generator to the main electrical supply coming into your house, the generator could feed back into the electrical distribution system and electrocute workers who are repairing lines.

If used improperly, generators can also damage the appliances you connect. Connecting a generator to the main electrical supply for your house requires the services of a licensed electrician. Installing the connection and a switch can cost $600 to $1,000.

Another consideration is the size of generator you need for the equipment you want to run. Generator sizes vary from about 8 to 14 horsepower and can handle 4,000 to 8,500 watts. Before buying a generator or connecting appliances to an existing generator, you need to consider the maximum and rated power of the generator.

To prevent overloading, you should calculate wattage requirements carefully. Items such as televisions, toasters, lamps, hot plates and coffee makers are resistive, or constant loads. The total load is found on the device nameplate.

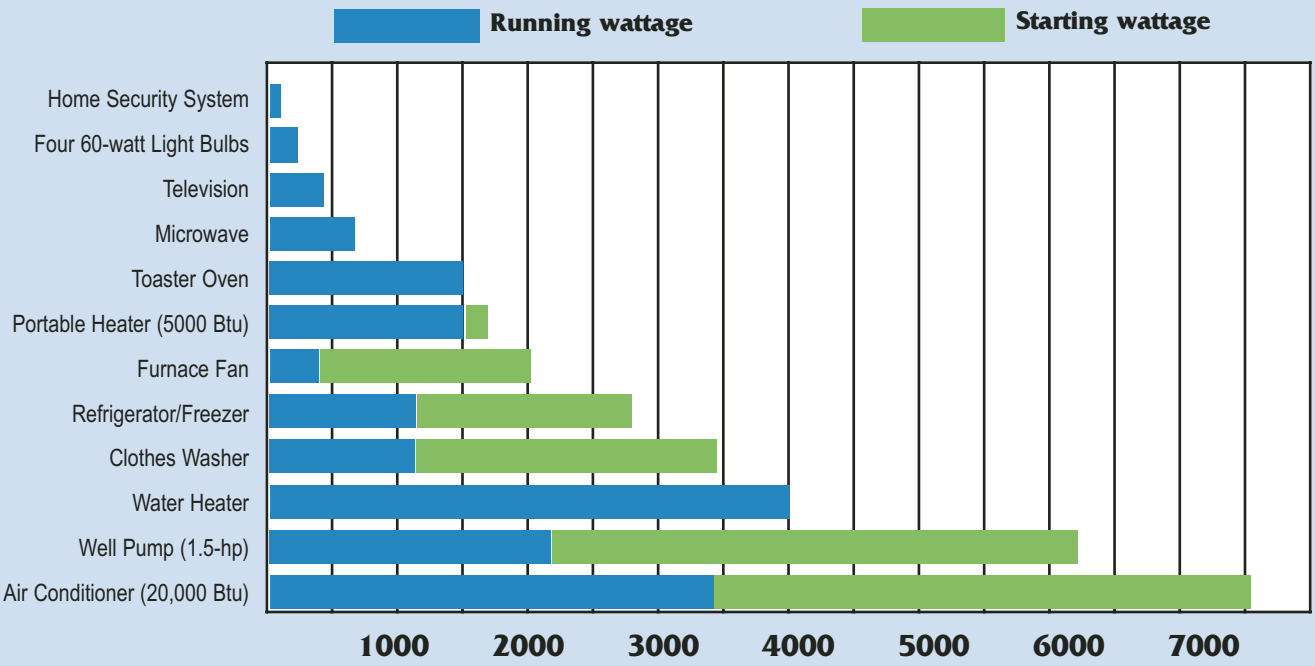
Items such as refrigerators, freezers and air conditioners are reactive loads; they are controlled by motors or compressors. Reactive loads use more current at start up.

When calculating the load of the items you want to power from a generator, add 20 percent to the load to be sure you get a big enough generator to safely run those appliances.

"When you run a generator you can definitely tell when an air conditioner or freezer compressor kicks in; the generator will buck and whine for a short time," said CCEC Engineer Jake Joplin.

Both the rated full load amps and the start up current should be given on the nameplate data for the device, Joplin said. The starting load should be calculated at running amps x 3. Remember, after the initial start, less power is required for actual operation.

The ratings shown below are samples. Wattage requirements vary with different appliances. Always start your largest electric motors first, then plug in other appliances one at a time.



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