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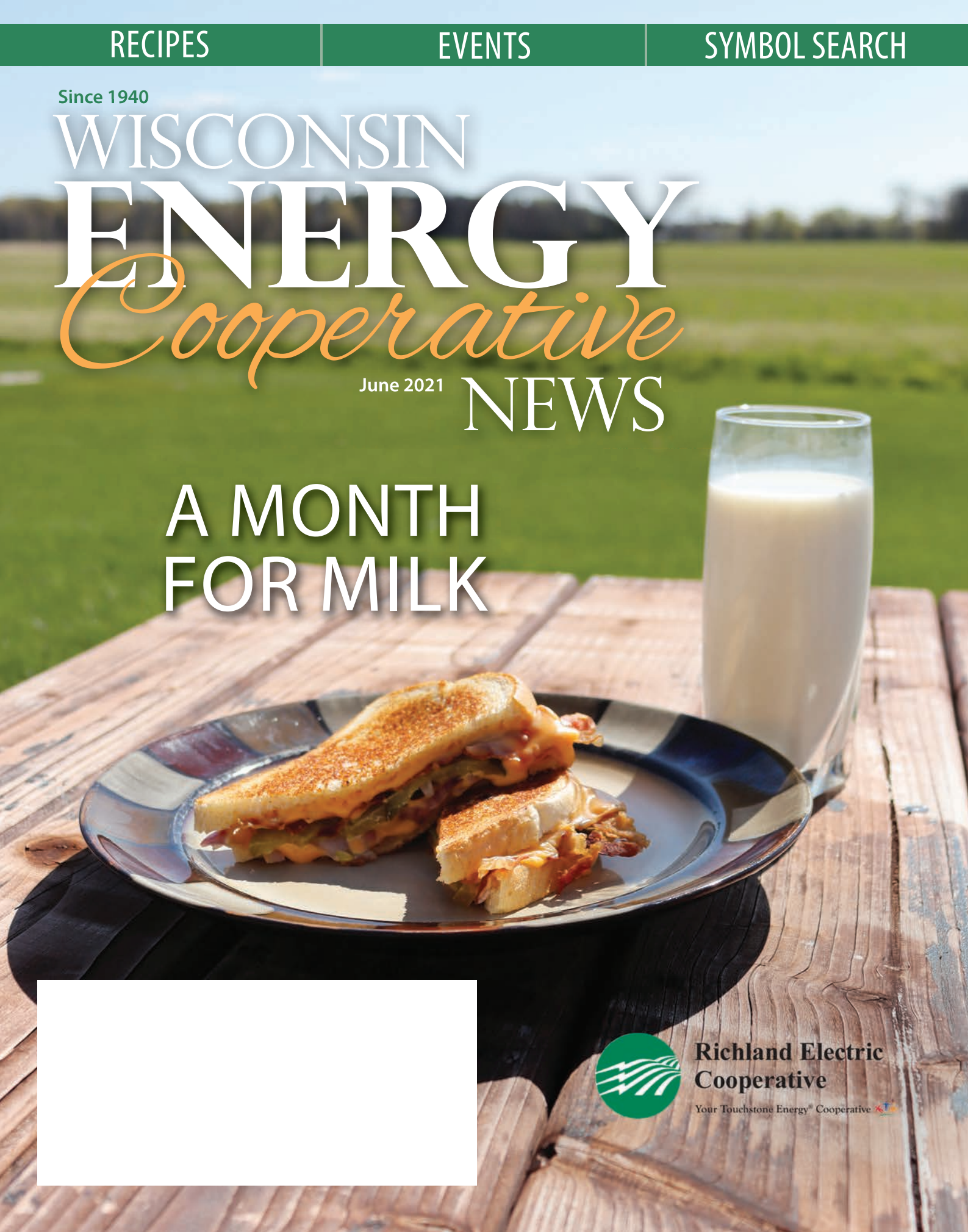
June 2021

A MONTH FOR MILK



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STAY SAFE AFTER AN ACCIDENT

Knowing What to Do Around Utility Equipment Could Save Your Life

Q: My vehicle has struck a pad-mounted transformer "green box" or other utility equipment or lines: now what?

A. First, assess the situation. If your car is not smoking or on fire, stay in your vehicle.

If you are in an accident or incident involving electrical equipment, remain in your vehicle or cab until the local utility arrives to de-energize power. Stepping out of your vehicle while touching it at the same time or trying to walk or run to safety can cause serious burn injuries or death.

Utility equipment includes:

- neighborhood pad-mounted transformers (metal boxes—usually green or grey)
- equipment such as a switching cabinet or junction box for underground utilities
- overhead power lines or poles

If you are in a multiple-car accident involving utility equipment, yell to others (from your car) and warn them not to leave their vehicle. Also warn those who might stop to help to not approach the scene.

Call 9-1-1 to report the accident location and clearly state to the dispatcher that electrical lines or equipment are involved.

Q: What if I see smoke or fire?

A. Try to stay calm. With your feet together, make a clear jump (without touching any part of the vehicle or tractor) and hop, shuffle, or waddle like a penguin (with both feet together) at least 30 feet away to safety. Just like downed power lines, ANY damaged utility equipment such as pad-mounted transformers or cabinets that house electrical equipment can send electrical current through the pavement or ground.

If you walk across the energized ground or touch an energized vehicle and ground at the same time, something called "difference of potential" (also called step potential) can occur, according to Trevor Clark, member of Safe Electricity's Member Assembly and director of outreach services at Richland Electric Cooperative.

"When you pass from one current to another by taking regular steps and cross varying voltages of electricity (think of how a water ripples—each ring represents a different voltage), this is difference of potential and it can cause extreme burn injuries or death," explained Clark.

If you hop or shuffle, your body is much less likely to expose itself to different voltages at the same time.

DO NOT go near or touch electrical equipment. DO NOT move a downed wire with your hand or an object such as a stick.

Q: Can there still be damage to equipment even if I don't see anything?

A: Yes, there can be damage to a pad-mounted transformer or other equipment that cannot be seen, even if metal boxes or cabinets look intact or appear to have minimal damage. When it comes to above-ground power lines, it is a fallacy that downed wires are insulated to the touch or that power is automatically cut once a power line is down or damaged.

Q: What can happen if a pad-mounted transformer or other equipment has been hit? Fire? Outage?

A: "Assuming the collision was hard enough there would be an outage," Clark said. "In a certain sense that would be the safest option."

However, he added that if the collision did not cause an outage there could be a fire. "The worst possible option is that an outage did not occur, that the vehicle (and ground) is energized, and individuals improperly exit the vehicle or others approach the scene," he said.

Another dangerous outcome could include a vehicle hitting a transformer or underground enclosure hard enough to dislocate it, exposing energized conductors or creating an area/hole to fall into that could be energized. This scenario especially applies to first responders or those who stop to help but could apply to anyone at the scene.

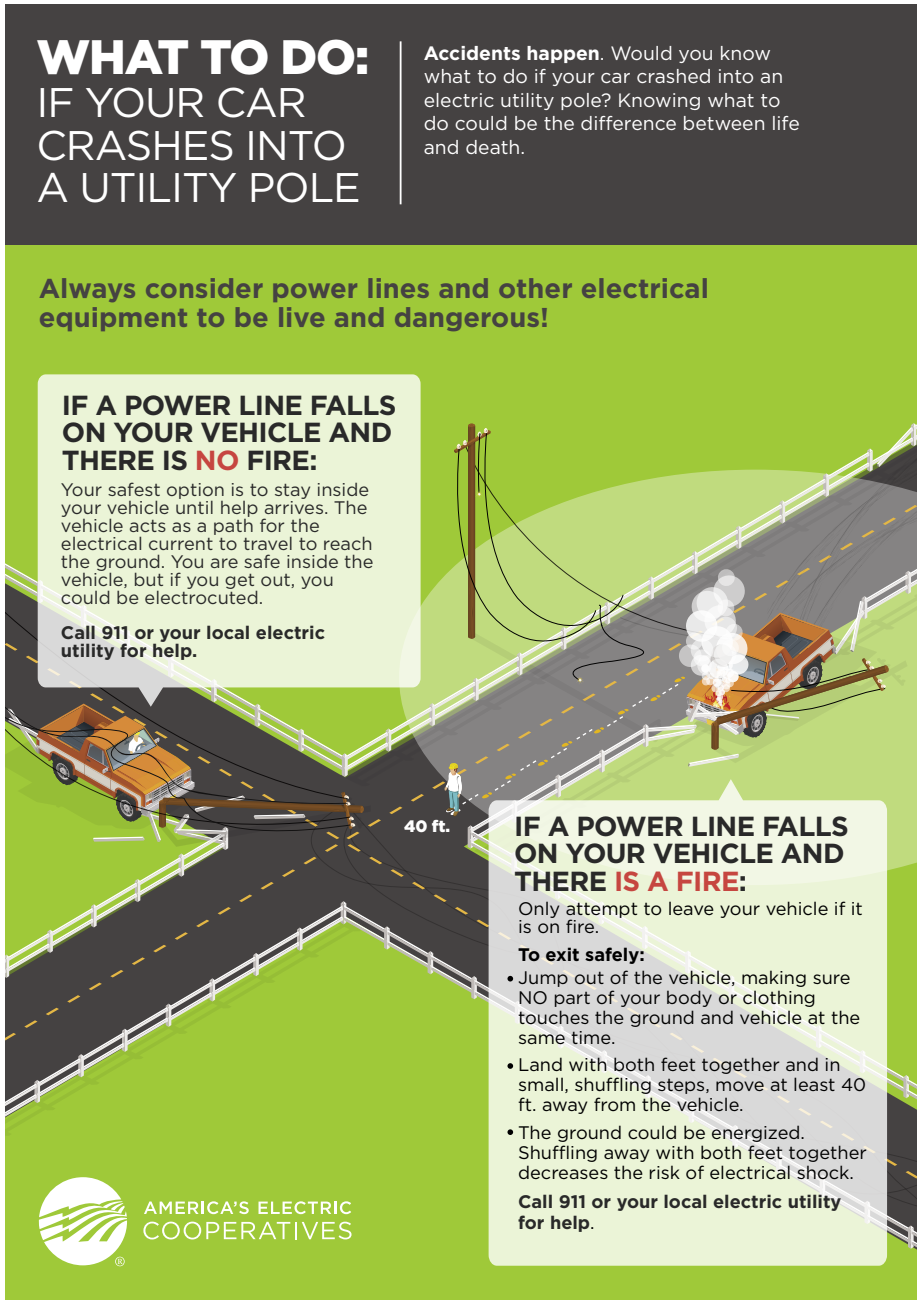
Q: So what is the bottom line?

A. If you have been in an accident involving a pad-mounted transformer, a power pole or downed lines, or anything that looks like utility equipment, do not leave your vehicle unless you are in imminent danger, and then properly exit your vehicle. Make a clear jump (without touching any part of the vehicle or tractor) and hop or shuffle at least 30 feet away to safety. Also warn others about the dangers.

Q: If I see damaged equipment or downed lines, should I report it to my utility?

A: Yes, call Richland Electric Cooperative at 608-647-3173 to report any damaged utility equipment you see. Most damage is reported, but not always. For example, let's say a feed truck hits a transformer and the driver did not notice. Although Richland Electric crews routinely check equipment for safety and maintenance, unreported damage can occur between checks. We want to be alerted of any problems so we can promptly address them.

To learn more, visit safeelectricity.org/license-to-live to watch a video produced by Wisconsin's electric cooperatives and Safe Electricity. The video is part of the License to Live campaign, aimed at making sure drivers know what to do in a crash that involves power lines or other electrical equipment.



SUMMER SHIFT:
SMALL STEPS FOR SAVINGS

When members save energy, they tend to save money. However, there is always something in our homes using electricity—whether to cool the home, turn on the lights, or run appliances. While using electricity is inevitable, HOW members choose to use it can be impactful.

The goal of the Summer Shift program is to shift non-essential electricity use to before 11 a.m. or after 7 p.m., June through August. These are times when electricity use is not at its peak and, therefore, is not as expensive. So, how does Summer Shift work?

If members shift their electricity use, they may not necessarily save energy. They could use the same amount of electricity, but at a different time of the day. That is still beneficial because it means the cooperative's wholesale power provider—Dairyland Power Cooperative—did not have to purchase as much power when electricity costs were more expensive. When the cooperative saves, so do members.

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The price of electricity purchased on the grid is always changing, based on the need for electricity balanced with available generation resources. As need—or demand—rises during the day, the price of electricity increases as more generation resources (power plants, solar arrays, etc.) are needed to power homes, businesses, and other buildings or devices. When temperatures cool and things quiet down for the night, electricity demand drops as do prices for electricity.

Dairyland must ensure it has enough generation resources to cover all the electricity needs of its 24 member cooperatives, including Richland Electric Cooperative, plus an additional reserve in case demand spikes above expectations. This means investments in additional resources to cover the needs of all members. If Richland Electric members, along with members of Dairyland's 23 other cooperatives, shift their electricity use to different times of the day, the overall "peak" is reduced.

When a member chooses to shift electricity use, it helps spread out electricity use throughout the day. The less electricity cooperative members use when prices are at their highest, the more stable Richland Electric can keep our retail rates. The more members who choose to participate, the more impactful these savings become.

Here are some tips to help you do the Summer Shift and save energy:

- Set your thermostat to 78 degrees (a level that is comfortable for the home, but a few degrees higher than normal). Closing curtains and pulling shades during the heat of the day will help the home feel cooler, longer. A ceiling fan or table fan throughout the afternoon will help circulate air.
- Set up a schedule for your smart thermostat and smart lighting options, ensuring a minimal amount of energy is used between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.
- Charge electric vehicles overnight.
- Set the hot water heater to 120 degrees.
- Wash dishes in an ENERGY STAR® dishwasher instead of by hand. This can save a home $111 per year.
- Open the dishwasher after the wash cycle to let dishes air dry.
- Wash your clothes with cold water, and hang up your wet clothes outside to air dry.
- Avoid using the oven. Do most of your cooking with a microwave or slow cooker to keep the kitchen cool. Better yet, use the summer heat as an excuse to fire up the backyard barbecue grill.

Rural Writers

FORKED STICKS AND BEAN CANS

By Al Cornell

I was at my aunt and uncle's place on the fringe of Sparta one time. It was the first time I ever saw a television. However, before that some of my cousins from there visited our farm. Mostly, they stayed at grandpa and grandma's in West Lima when school was out, but they enjoyed coming down to the hollow.

In the spring of the year before I started school, Harry, following in the footprints of older siblings, came to visit. He should have been attending high school during those early spring days, but I've heard he had some issues at school and might have been between schools at that time. Anyway, he showed up, and I got some schooling in how to make slingshots and collect sap.

For a slingshot, Harry selected a forked stick of the right size. Then he sliced strips from an old real rubber innertube. With baling wire, he attached the strips to the ends of the fork and added a leather pocket to the other end of the strips.

We selected medium sized pieces of gravel from the road. I had fun with it, even though I couldn't pull it back far enough to send a rock a hundred feet. Harry had made slingshots before; he was quite accurate with them. He shot a bird. I would like to think it was a house sparrow as we were inclined to reduce their numbers around the buildings.

Next, we turned our attention to sap collection. People didn't generate much garbage in those days, and most rural areas didn't have a designated place to go with it. Where the road on our property ran next to a side channel in a dry ditch, some folks from West Lima would dump their garbage.

Well, for the first step in collecting maple sap you need containers. Harry and I visited that dump and picked out large bean cans. We took them to the pump and washed them in cold water.

Next, we took Dad's brace and a bit to drill holes in trees. I don't think it was the prime time of year for sap, and Harry applied a wildcat drilling technique. Some of the trees yielded sap. We nailed cans to those trees in such a fashion as to catch some sap. None of it was ever boiled down into syrup, but Harry and I did enjoy gulping down that slightly sweetened water out of those old bean cans. That worked fine for one day, but then I said something about it to my folks. The parental influence changed my mind about drinking bean-can sap.

Later, I was with Dad on the hill behind the house. He scowled at a drill hole in a tree and said, "I wish Harry hadn't drilled holes in my oak trees."

In later years, I got better schooling in making maple syrup. There were a few years when Dad had the time to tap trees and collect sap. Mom boiled the sap into that superb syrup on the woodstove in the kitchen. Once, the fire was a bit too hot and the syrup boiled over onto the stove and the floor. Once it starts, it goes. That is a mess you never want, and it persists in the form of more smoke every time the stove gets a little hotter. After that, Dad built an outdoor burner out of an old cattle tank.

When I think back to Harry and those early experiences with slingshots and maple sap, it seems like he had the slingshot thing figured out but was just learning the sap business.

Do you have a knack for writing? If you've got an original story you'd like to share with your fellow members, we'd love to see it! Please send it to Trevor Clark via email, tclark@rec.coop, or mail it to the REC office, 1027 N. Jefferson St., Richland Center, WI 53581. You just might see your work in print on this page!

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