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Spring into Electrical Safety with your Children

National Safe Kids Week April 25 - May 3

West Point, NE – At this time of year many adults and children are spending more time outdoors to enjoy the springtime weather. In light of National Safe Kids Week, occurring April 25-May 3, Cuming County Public Power District and Safe Electricity encourages everyone to learn how to protect themselves from electrical hazards outdoors, and to share this information with children.

“Children often do not understand the danger of electricity and electrical equipment. In their innocent and imaginative minds, what can be potentially dangerous may go unnoticed, or even appear enticing and fun,” CCPPD Safety Director Jim Yosten said. "Take an opportunity to point out overhead power lines and any other electrical equipment to children and explain what they are.”

CCPPD recommends teaching children to follow these rules:

- Never climb trees near power lines. Even if the power lines aren't touching the tree, they could touch when more weight is added to the branch.
- Kites and model airplanes should only be flown during good weather conditions in large open areas like a open park or a wide field. They should stay away from overhead power lines or other electrical equipment such as substations. If a kite gets stuck in a tree that's near power lines, don't climb up to get it. Electricity can travel down kite strings or wires. Contact your electric utility for assistance.
- Never climb a utility pole or tower. The electricity carried through this equipment is extremely high voltage and could kill you.
- Don't play on or around pad-mounted electrical equipment. These are often green metal “box” transformers on cement pads.
- Never go into an electric substation for any reason - even on a dare. Electric substations contain high-voltage equipment, even raising your hand inside one can cause an arc that may result in an electric shock. Never attempt to retrieve a pet, ball or any toy from these areas. Call your electric utility instead.
- Immediately seek shelter if lightning or thunder is present while playing outdoors.

When designing a tree house or outdoor play area for children, take preventive precautions before starting your project. Do not install playground equipment or swimming pools underneath or near power lines. Installation of either will require some digging; be sure to call

your local underground utility locating service to have buried lines marked so you can avoid serious injury and damage.

Protect all family members from serious shock and injuries by installing Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) on outdoor outlets and in interior room where water is present. GFCIs shut off power instantly if they detect a problem. Use portable GFCIs for outdoor outlets that don't have them. GFCIs are affordably priced and found at hardware stores.

Be careful using electrical appliances outdoors, even if plugged into GFCI-equipped outlets. Never touch an electrical appliance while in a pool or hot tub and keep all electrical appliances at least ten feet away from pools, ponds and wet surfaces. Teach your kids that it is never safe to swim in a pool or lake when a storm is brewing. Also keep in mind that you should never use appliances with extension cords that are frayed or damaged, and always be sure the ground prong is intact.

“Water often attracts kids, but water and electricity never mix,” warned Yosten. “Teach older children to exercise caution before plugging in a radio, CD player, or any electrical gadget outdoors, and never leave any electrical appliances outside.”

When you are done using a radio, CD player or any other electrical gadget outdoors, bring it inside with you. If it rains, the electrical device could get wet and cause an electrical shock when used later.

“Spring showers bring more than tempting puddles for kids to splash in, they can also leave electric hazards behind,” Yosten added. “Flooded areas are never safe spots to wade or play in, and may be in contact with energized electrical equipment or fallen power lines.”

Make sure all of your family members know to stay away from downed power lines and wires, and tell children to report any fallen or dangling wires to an adult. Downed power lines are extremely dangerous for children as well as adults. Always assume that any power line is fully charged and stay far away. Call your local electric company immediately if you or your child encounters a downed power line, and include this number with other posted emergency phone numbers.

For more information on electrical safety, visit www.ccppd.com or call 402-372-2463.

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