

NORTH PLAINS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

P.O. Box 1008 • Perryton, TX 79070 • Phone (806) 435-5482

DON'T GET ZAPPED! Protect Your Home and Business From Power Surges With Power Quality Plus

Ask anyone who's ever had a power surge—it's a nightmare. Suffer through one lightning strike or a surge caused by disturbances on power lines, phone lines or cable lines and you could kiss your expensive television goodbye. In fact, you might have to replace your satellite dish, VCR, stereo, computer, refrigerator ... the list goes on.

What's the Big Concern?

It's smaller, faster chips and a growing number of microprocessors. A few years ago, computer chips had only 2,000 transistors in about 3/8 square inch. Today's Pentium-type chips have over 10 million! Spaces between components are so compressed that damaging arcing can easily occur at above 5 to 10 volts. Damage can also result from lightning even miles away. In addition, almost all new home appliances and office equipment contain microprocessors.

Strike back with Power Quality Plus!

Now there is an easy and affordable way to protect your electronic

equipment and appliances from power surges: Power Quality Plus, a surge program offered by North Plains Electric Cooperative.

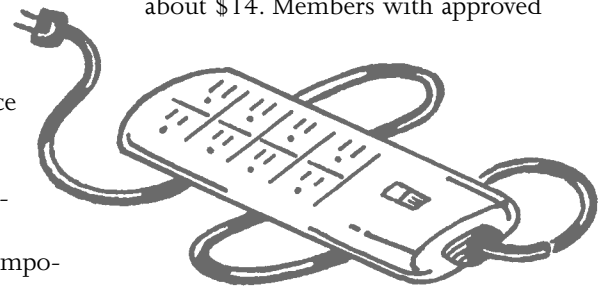
Investing in high-quality surge suppression equipment with proven effectiveness and reliability is smart. Failure to take protective measures risks your electronic investments. Purchasing a cheap surge suppressor promotes a false sense of security. Remember: "A cheap surge protector is the most expensive piece of electronic equipment you can buy."

Backed by a reliable, hassle-free warranty, Power Quality Plus has a complete line of components, designed to give you the protection you need. Whether it's whole-house protection or simply a device to protect your computer, entertainment center or single-phase water well, NPEC has a solution for you. A full line of commercial protectors is also available. Uninterruptible Power Supplies (UPS) complement the plug

strips and meter base surge protectors.

"We chose the Power Quality Plus program for our members for many reasons, including its comprehensive warranty program and the fact it is a customizable program," said Bill Carson, member service specialist.

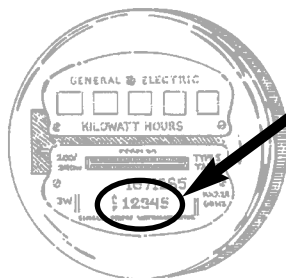
According to Carson, co-op members can buy the equipment at 10 percent over wholesale cost starting at about \$14. Members with approved



credit can purchase products and pay out the balance over three months without interest.

For a free estimate on a protection program for your home or business, or for more information, call Bill Carson at (806) 435-5482 or 1-800-272-5482.

WHEN REPORTING AN OUTAGE



Giving us the meter number helps us locate you faster and better than directions.

For service call:
(806) 435-5482 or
1-800-272-5482

If you would like a refrigerator magnet to record your meter number to have it easily available in case of an outage, please call NPEC.

SEVERE WEATHER! ARE YOU READY?

Lightning

Lightning strikes kill more Americans than tornadoes or hurricanes. Don't take chances with this deadly force of nature.

Lightning Safety Rules:

- Move to low ground.
- Avoid open fields.
- Do not seek shelter under a tree. Trees are easy targets for lightning.
- At the beach, or in a swimming pool, get out of the water immediately.
- Go inside a building and stay away from windows and doors.
- Stay away from metal objects.
- Avoid electric appliances and metal plumbing.
- Get off the phone.
- Do not touch metal objects, such as golf clubs or bicycles.
- Inside a car is relatively safe, but don't touch interior metal.
- If your hair stands on end, you may be a target. Crouch low on the balls of your feet and try not to touch the ground with your knees or hands.

Stay aware and play it safe during thunderstorms. Don't be a lightning rod.



This public service message is brought to you by North Plains Electric Cooperative.

NEW TRAFFIC LAWS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Several new traffic laws went into effect last fall. These laws have received little media coverage and NPEC is pleased to inform members of several important changes.

One of the most important changes deals with commercial driver's licenses (CDLs). According to Ochiltree Justice of the Peace Braden Karber, "Persons holding a CDL need to be extremely careful about moving violations." Statutes now state that anyone who holds a CDL may not take defensive driving or use adjudication for a moving violation. In addition, new rules allow for disqualification from driving commercial vehicles from 60 days up to life for various violations which began accumulating in September 2003. These violations can occur in either a commercial vehicle or any other motor vehicle. For example, if a person with a CDL gets two speeding tickets in his personal car, he can be disqualified from driving a commercial vehicle for 60 days. For more information on this change, please refer to Chapter 522, Subchapter H, of the Texas Transportation Code.

Another change deals with perpetual violators of traffic laws, who are considered to be unsafe by the State of Texas. The Driver Responsibility Program sets up a points system for your driver's license for convictions of traffic violations after September 2003. It assigns two points for a moving violation or speeding more than 10 percent over the posted speed and three points for a moving violation resulting in an accident. Each year the Department of Transportation will assess a surcharge on the license of a person who accumulates six or more points in the preceding 36-month period. The annual amount of the surcharge is \$100 for the first six points and \$25 for each additional point. It also adds surcharges for certain intoxicated driver offenses, driving while license is invalid, driving without financial responsibility, or driving without a valid license. For more information on this change, please refer to Chapter 708 of the Texas Transportation Code.

The "Move Over Act" also went into effect September 1. This law requires drivers nearing a stopped emergency vehicle that has lights activated, unless otherwise directed by a law enforcement officer, to either vacate the lane closest to the emergency vehicle when driving on a highway with two or more lanes traveling the direction of the emergency vehicle, or slow down to a speed not to exceed 20 miles per hour below the speed limit. (If the speed limit is below 25 mph the driver must slow down to 5 mph.) Emergency vehicles include police, emergency medical service and fire vehicles. A violation of this act is punishable by a maximum fine of \$200, which increases to \$500 if the violation results in property damage and to a Class B misdemeanor if the violation results in bodily injury.

Having a video display that is visible from the driver's seat is illegal. A new law (S.B. 209) expands the definition of video receiving equipment to include digital videodisc players, video-cassette players or similar equipment. This equipment may be used only if it is located so that the video display is not visible from the operator's seat.

The driver's license of anyone convicted of illegally racing on a public roadway will be automatically suspended for one year. Before the license can be reinstated, the driver will have to complete 10 hours of community service. The punishment for illegal racing increases to a Class B misdemeanor. The law also increases the punishment for drivers who are racing drunk, who have open containers of alcohol in the vehicle when racing, who seriously injure or kill someone during the race, or who have been convicted multiple times of illegal racing. Those offenses range from a Class A misdemeanor to a second-degree felony.

It is also now illegal to add reflective material, lights, emblems or anything else that changes the color of the license plate or makes it difficult to read the letters on the license plate. The name of the state where the

vehicle is registered must be visible.

It is now a state jail felony to drive while intoxicated with a passenger younger than 15.

It is also now a Class A misdemeanor to seriously injure someone when illegally passing a school bus that is loading or unloading students.

The driver's license of anyone under the age of 21 who is convicted of the manufacture, delivery, possession, transportation or use of an abusable volatile chemical will be suspended.

Human trafficking is now a second-degree felony; if the person trafficked is younger than 14 years of age or the commission of the offense results in death, the offense is a first-degree felony. The new bill also makes it a Class B misdemeanor to transport a person in a trailer or semi-trailer.

A new law (H.B. 292) strengthens an existing law and allows a police officer to have a blood or breath alcohol sample taken from a driver involved in an alcohol-related crash that kills or seriously injures another person, in either a motor vehicle or a boat.

It is now a Class A misdemeanor to manufacture, sell or possess a placard that is deceptively similar to a disabled parking placard without proper authorization. A person also commits a Class B misdemeanor if they knowingly park in a space designated for persons with disabilities using a counterfeit placard. It is also now an offense for a person to park their vehicle where it blocks a disabled access aisle that is designed to aid persons with disabilities.

Applicants may voluntarily list on their driver's license or identification card any health condition that might impede communication with peace officers. The applicant must supply DPS with a written statement from a licensed physician. (NOTE: This law took effect January 1, 2004.)

If you need more information on any of these changes, please contact your Justice of the Peace or local peace officers or visit the State of Texas statutes website at <http://www.capitol.state.tx>.

MAY IS NATIONAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

According to a recent estimate, approximately three people die each day in residential electricity-related incidents in the home. A great many of those are related to problems with outlets, power cords and extension cords. To help reduce those numbers, the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) and your electric cooperative encourage consumers to “plug into electrical safety.”

Following are some tips to help keep you safe:

Outlets

- Have a qualified, licensed electrician inspect your outlets and electrical system.
- Plugs should fit fully and securely into outlets, but should not be forced.
- Make sure there are safety covers on all unused outlets to protect children.
- If an outlet or switch wall plate is hot or discolored by heat, shut off the circuit and have it professionally checked.

- Have additional outlets installed where you need them instead of relying on extension cords and power strips.

Power cords and extension cords

- Check that all electrical items, including extension cords, are certified by a nationally recognized independent testing lab, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), CSA Group, ETL and MET Labs.
- Extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis; unplug and safely store them after every use.
- Do not place power cords and extension cords in high traffic areas or under carpets, rugs or furniture, and never nail or staple them to the wall or baseboard.
- Never remove the ground pin (the third prong) to make a three-prong plug fit a two-prong outlet.
- Make sure extension cords are properly rated for their intended use, indoor or outdoor, and meet or exceed the power needs of the appliance or tool being used.

- All electrical items and extension cords should be kept in good condition. If damage is discovered, take the item to an authorized repair center or cut the cord and dispose of it safely.

GFCIs and AFCIs

- Make sure your home includes ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs), which prevent accidental electrocution by shutting off the circuit if they sense a “leak” of current off the circuit, and arc-fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs), which help prevent fires by shutting off the circuit if they sense arcing where electricity has to jump a gap. Consider installing GFCIs and AFCIs on all circuits except those serving major appliances, which may cause nuisance tripping.
- Test your GFCIs monthly and after every major electrical storm.

For more electrical safety tips, contact your electric cooperative or visit ESFI’s website at www.electrical-safety.org.

Prepare Your Central Air Conditioner for Summer

Spring is a good time for maintaining your air conditioner. If you keep the coils of your air conditioner clean, it can improve your comfort and reduce your electricity costs this summer.

Start by inspecting the outdoor condensing unit. The large outdoor coil—it looks like a car radiator—is where heat is dissipated from your home. The fan in the condensing unit has to move a whole lot of air through the coil, so make sure that there are no airflow restrictions around the condensing unit. Cut nearby grass, shrubs and tree branches so they are at least 3 feet away at the sides and 5 feet away overhead.

Most condenser coils are loaded with pollen and dust even when you can’t see it. The longest a condenser

should go without cleaning is two or three years, depending on how much it operates during the summer. If your cooling season is four months or more, annual cleaning is an excellent idea. Turn off the power to the unit, and remove any visible grass and lint from the fins and louvers with an old hairbrush or whisk broom. Then put on a pair of rubber gloves and spray biodegradable outdoor coil cleaner into the coil. Wait five or ten minutes and flush the coil with a gentle water spray.

Your indoor coil might also need cleaning, even though you can’t easily see it. If your air conditioner’s filter or blower is dirty, then your indoor coil is probably dirty, too. Cleaning the indoor coil is usually a job for professionals, unless you have easy



access, as with a central heat pump. To help keep your indoor coil clean, make sure your filter fits well, is easy to change, and that you change it regularly. Have your air conditioning contractor make improvements to the filter, if needed, so it will be easy to get to. Change the filter often to help keep your indoor air conditioner coil clean and reduce energy consumption.