

Keep your food safe during long outages

Flicker, flicker, flicker — dark! The lights have just gone off, and the search for candles and matches has begun. But even if you can see by candlepower, there are other dangers lurking in the dark that you can't see: bacteria that will begin growing in perishable foods when the electricity is off.

During the summer, severe storms can wreak havoc with power lines and equipment, and storing food safely becomes a challenge if the power goes off. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends these steps to follow:

Before an outage

- Keep refrigerator at 40 degrees or below. Freeze items like fresh meat and poultry that you won't use immediately.
- Keep freezer set to 0 degrees or below. Group frozen foods to help items stay colder longer.
- If you anticipate an extended power outage, buy dry or block ice to keep the fridge and/or freezer cold.

During an outage

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed! If the doors stay closed during the length of the outage, a full freezer will hold its temperature for 48 hours; a refrigerator will keep food safe for four hours.

After an outage

- Check the temperature inside your refrigerator and/or freezer. If the temperatures are safe, the food should be safe to eat.

For more recommendations, visit www.fda.gov and search for power outage safety.

SCAMMERS

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banking information to deposit the credit back to your checking account. Don't fall for this scam! If you make an overpayment on your electric bill, we will automatically apply the credit to your account.

Another trending scam is smishing (short for SMS phishing). Many consumers know to watch out for suspicious emails, but we tend to trust text messages sent to our phones. Always question suspicious texts, especially from someone claiming to represent a utility. Clay Electric will only send you important updates via text if you've signed up for notifications with the MyClayElectric online portal or app.

These are just a couple examples of scams, so it's important to watch for any red flags. Here are a few reminders on how to take control of the situation when you've been targeted by a scammer:

- **Take your time.** Utility scammers try to create a sense of urgency so you'll act fast and hand over personal information, especially over the phone. Take a moment to think about the situation before acting.
- **Be suspicious.** Scammers typically request immediate payments through prepaid debit cards or third-party apps. Unusual requests like this should raise red flags. Remember, if the request seems strange and out of the ordinary, you're likely being targeted by a scammer.
- **Confirm before you act.** If you're contacted by someone claiming to represent Clay Electric or another utility, but you're unsure, just hang up the phone and call the utility directly — not the phone number you were given or see on the Caller ID. You can reach us at 1-800-224-4917 to verify the situation.

Our increasingly connected world provides scammers with more opportunities to connect with unsuspecting consumers. Be vigilant, and report any scams to us so we can let others in our community know. Together, we can help prevent our neighbors from being victimized.

The Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc. _____

Power Line

July 2021

Don't fall victim to utility scammers

Every day, millions of Americans are targeted by scammers through phone calls, emails, text messages, online or in person. Scammers' tactics can change daily, which is why it's important for consumers to stay on top of the latest scam reports from local and national news outlets, as well as your local utility companies.

Just last month, several Clay Electric members were targeted through a phone scam where the scammers demanded immediate payment and threatened to shut off power if the money was not received. Remember, the co-op will never call you and demand immediate payment. We notify members of past due accounts through letters in the mail, and emails and text messages if a member is signed up for notifications with MyClayElectric.

We want you to be aware of two trending scam tactics. One is the overpayment trick, where a scammer contacts you and claims you have overpaid your utility bill. The scammer will say they need your personal



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Energy efficiency group helps you save money

Membership in a not-for-profit electric cooperative has benefits.

Clay Electric and our wholesale power provider, Seminole Electric, work in a group called the Energy Efficiency Working Group (EEWG). This group reviews techniques and technologies that could save members money, and reduce the usage of fossil fuels.

The EEWG was formed in 2008 by Seminole with the purpose of educating consumers, and to evaluate energy management programs. All nine of Seminole's member cooperatives participate.

Clay works with the EEWG to create consumer energy efficiency brochures and videos. This information can be used to help you save money on your electric bill, or switch to more efficient appliances in your home that rely on electricity.

Through the EEWG, we are also studying several technologies. These technologies have the potential to reduce the usage of fossil-fuels, by increasing the use of electricity generated at highly-efficient power plants, and with renewable sources like solar.

- When programmed properly, smart thermostats can provide individual members with bill savings through energy efficiency. Smart thermostats can also be controlled by utilities to reduce stress on the electric grid.

- Indoor agriculture provides an exciting opportunity to enhance Florida's strong agricultural economy, and to use



The Energy Efficiency Working Group (EEWG) gathers in February 2020. The EEWG was formed in 2008 by Seminole Electric with the purpose of educating consumers, and to evaluate energy management programs.

electricity in new ways. Indoor agriculture could add new jobs, provide fresh local produce out-of-season and use electricity at night when it is more cost-effective.

- Clay Electric is also excited about electric vehicles. In 2020, we launched a page on our website (ClayElectric.com/EV) detailing the key benefits of EV ownership, and calculators to help users understand savings that can be expected based on

local gas prices and electricity rates. The co-op also purchased an electric vehicle in 2020, a new Chevy Bolt, to help demonstrate benefits to employees and members.

Remarkable new technologies are being developed faster than ever, but our electric service will continue to be safe, reliable and affordable. Clay Electric looks forward to continuing to provide you with the greatest value now, and in the future.

Don't let hot weather scorch your budget

With temperatures soaring into the 90s, Clay Electric members can expect to see their electricity bills climb as well.

Hot weather, air conditioning and higher electricity usage go hand in hand, because as outdoor temperatures spike, so does the amount of time your home's air conditioning system operates in order to provide the desired level of comfort inside your home.

There are steps you can take to use electricity wisely and still stay comfortable:

- Raise the thermostat as high as comfortable. Set your thermostat at 78 degrees or higher when you are home. Every degree below 78 degrees can add up to 8 percent to your cooling costs depending on your home's and HVAC system's energy efficiency. Raise the thermostat 5 degrees when you leave the house.

- Use ceiling fans to make the room more comfortable, but only use them while you are in the room. A ceiling fan helps cool people, but it doesn't cool the air.

- On extremely hot days, do less cooking inside; use a microwave and/or cook outside. Do laundry early in the day. Because clothes dryers release a lot of heat, consider hanging clothes outside to dry.

- Turn off all unnecessary heat-generating appliances such as lights, computers, etc.

Login to the MyClayElectric online portal or mobile app to monitor your usage and take steps to save.

Power Line is an informational publication of Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc. It is distributed monthly with members' statements. If you have questions or comments about Power Line, write Justin Caudell at P.O. Box 308, Keystone Heights, FL 32656; or email: jcaudell@clayelectric.com. Clay Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees will meet at noon Thursday, July 22 and Thursday, Aug. 26 in Keystone Heights.