

Electric News

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We Are Prepared for Summer Storms

By Lewis Sheffield, General Manager

Summer is here, school is out and families are gearing up for a few months of fun and relaxation. While summer brings much fun in the sun, it can also bring the occasional severe storm. In the event of a power outage, you can trust that Little Ocmulgee EMC is ready to respond.

Most power outages are caused by damage to power lines from falling trees and branches or their contact with live lines during high winds. We work year-round—through right-of-way clearing—to ensure power lines in our service territory stand little risk of being damaged by trees, branches or other types of vegetation.

Despite our best efforts, during major storms, damage can occur to transmission lines, substations and distribution power lines. When this happens, our first priority is to safely restore power to as many members as possible in the shortest amount of time.

We start by mobilizing our line crews and other critical staff. Every available phone line is utilized to take



your outage report calls. This is why it is important to keep your phone number(s) and other personal information current with us. We want to be able to quickly identify your account(s) so we can safely restore your power as quickly as possible.

We also offer callbacks at your request to ensure your power was restored. Once an outage ticket is taken, the big problems are handled first—like damage to three-phase lines,

which serve hundreds of people. These problems must be corrected before we can focus on other areas where more localized damage may have occurred.

Little Ocmulgee EMC's line crews inspect substations to determine if the problem starts there, or if there could be an issue down the line. If the root of the problem is at the substation, power can be restored to thousands of members from that source as long as there are no more issues down the line.

Next, line crews check the main distribution lines, tap lines and service lines that deliver power into neighborhoods and communities right up to your meter base. Line crews work to repair the damaged lines until power is restored to all members. If you continue to experience an outage, there may be damage to your individual service. Make sure you notify Little Ocmulgee EMC so crews can inspect these lines.

We will do our best to avoid power outages, but sometimes the weather has other plans. Please know our employees are trained and ready to serve as safely and efficiently as possible.



Five Questions to Ask Your Home Inspector

By Miranda Boutelle

Many factors go into buying a home. For most people, energy efficiency does not top the list, and unfortunately, houses don't typically come with energy-efficiency ratings.

It can be difficult for a buyer to know how efficient a home is when viewing the listing online or taking a tour. But your home inspector can help you identify potential energy costs and energy-efficiency upgrades.

Some homes may already be efficient, while other homes may need improvements. There's nothing wrong with buying an inefficient home, but you will want to know what you're getting into and that you can afford the energy costs once you get the keys.

Here are five questions to ask your home inspector:

1. What is the condition of the electrical panel and wiring throughout the home?

A panel upgrade or rewiring can be a costly endeavor. An older panel and wiring aren't inefficient, but it can delay or make some energy-efficiency projects more expensive. In some homes, older wiring may need to be replaced before insulation can be added.

Make sure the panel can accommodate any new appliances you might want to add, such as air conditioning or an electric vehicle charger.

2. How old is the HVAC system, and how efficient is it? Has it been maintained?

The typical life span of an HVAC system is 15 to 25 years. As the largest energy user and often the most expensive equipment in the home, you will want to know the energy, maintenance and replacement costs. If the HVAC system is old, consider the cost for a replacement.

3. How old is the water heater?

The life span of a storage water heater is about 10 years. The cost to replace a water heater ranges from \$400 to \$3,600, depending on the unit type and installation costs. If an older water heater is in a finished space or on a second floor, replace it before it fails and

potentially causes water damage.

4. What are the levels and conditions of insulation in the attic, walls and floor?

Insulation is one of the easiest and most beneficial energy-efficiency upgrades you can make. It isn't as pretty as new countertops, but it can make a home more comfortable, waste less energy and reduce outdoor noise.

To cut down on drafts and make insulation more effective, air seal before insulating. Seal cracks, gaps or holes in the walls, floors, ceiling and framing between heated and unheated spaces.

If your new home needs insulation and air sealing, make this your efficiency priority. The sooner you do it, the more energy you will save over time. Recommended insulation levels vary by location. You can find information about insulation and air sealing online at www.energy.gov.

5. Are there any extras in this home that will increase my utility bills?

Any motors in the home or on the property should be assessed, including pumps for wells and septic systems. When it comes to extras, remember life's luxuries aren't free. You will want to be able to afford the cost of operating amenities, such as pools, hot tubs and saunas.

Additional considerations

You can request the home's utility bills for the previous two years from the seller or realtor. Your bill will not be the same due to your personal energy habits, but this information will give you an estimate of the home's energy costs.

Electric rates vary across the country. If you are moving to a new city, be sure to check the rates at the local electric utility.

When buying a home that checks all your boxes, ask your home inspector the right efficiency questions. Understanding the condition of appliances, features and building materials can save you from hidden surprises in your home and on your first utility bills.

Miranda Boutelle is the Director of Operations and Customer Engagement at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy-efficiency company. She also writes on energy-efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.



MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

Ask your home inspector if the electrical panel can accommodate new appliances you might want to add, such as air conditioning or an electric vehicle charger.

Utility Notification Requirements for Anyone Working Within 10 Feet of a High-Voltage Line

Contractors and landowners have substantial compliance responsibility when working near an electric utility's underground and overhead distribution power lines. Georgia law and Little Ocmulgee EMC regulations require contractors and landowners to contact Georgia 811 before working near power lines.

Little Ocmulgee EMC hopes to avoid personal injuries, unnecessary power outages and line damage associated with accidents involving its electric distribution facilities. Contractors can avoid substantial equipment damage and repair costs, as well as personal injuries to their employees, if they abide by these requirements.

These regulations apply to contractors, well drillers, farmers, landowners and others who may have a personal business interest in work performed near power lines. While the following rules address overhead power lines, Georgia law requires that anyone digging in Georgia must contact Georgia 811 at least three days before construction begins, so utility companies can be contacted to mark underground facilities.

High Voltage Safety Act

The High Voltage Safety Act became law in Georgia on July 1, 1992. This act requires individuals performing work within 10 feet of overhead high-voltage electric power lines to notify Georgia 811 during its regular business hours at least 72 hours prior to beginning the work (excluding weekends and holidays).

Georgia 811 will then contact the owner of the power lines to take appropriate safety measures to prevent injuries, property damage and

interruptions of utility service resulting from accidental or inadvertent contact with high-voltage electric lines. Failure to call Georgia 811 constitutes a violation of the law and can result in fines and penalties, in addition to liability for repair of damages.

Contractors are encouraged to become fully familiar with the details of the High Voltage Safety Act. Information is available directly from Georgia 811. Use the same telephone number for notifications or contact them online.

Georgia 811
Statewide: 811
Nationwide: 811
www.gaupc.com

Special notice to farmers

Modern farm equipment can be raised or lowered to allow for harvesting greater amounts with fewer delays. Use of this equipment requires that you check fields and roads where your equipment may come within 10 feet of overhead power lines.

The power lines were installed to comply with the National Electrical Safety Code clearance guidelines at the time of construction. If any part of your equipment will be within 10 feet of overhead power lines, you must notify Georgia 811 at least 72 hours before you work under the power lines.

Wells and pumps

Both the well driller and the landowner bear responsibility to notify Georgia 811 when any equipment or materials will be within 10 feet of overhead high-voltage power lines. For safety reasons, installation of wells and well pumps at distances closer than 30 feet from any overhead

power line should generally be avoided, but in locations where the options for well placement are limited, Little Ocmulgee EMC will help determine the minimum clearance requirements, as specified in the National Electrical Safety Code.

Minimum clearance requirements for the location of wells and well pumps vary according to the line voltage and certain site-specific attributes, and Little Ocmulgee EMC should be consulted to determine the appropriate minimum recommended distance. Clearance requirements vary with the voltage of the power line, the height of the line above ground, the distance to poles that support the line and other local factors that determine where a drilling rig will be stationed for installation and future maintenance or pump replacement activities.

A Little Ocmulgee EMC representative will meet with the well driller and/or landowner to determine the minimum acceptable distance if the desired pump location is closer than 30 feet from an overhead line.

Easements

Little Ocmulgee EMC's Service Rules and Regulations require the contractor to notify Little Ocmulgee EMC directly if proposed work and/or construction will be performed inside the utility's easement. In most cases, the easement extends 20 feet on each side of the power line. Little Ocmulgee EMC will provide the necessary protection to avoid hazards. Again, consideration should be given to providing plenty of time to respond.

Call Little Ocmulgee EMC's Engineering Department at (912) 568-7171 or (800) 342-1290 and ask to speak with a representative.

Notice of Patronage Capital Assignment for 2021

Because Little Ocmulgee EMC is a nonprofit cooperative, revenue collected in excess of expenses is eventually returned to the co-op's member-owners, our electric customers. After each year is completed, margins are assigned to members' accounts so they can be paid later as capital credits.

Assigned margins are retained for several years to be used, in place of borrowed money, as a source of funding for the construction of new lines and other utility plant expenses. This helps the cooperative keep the cost of providing service as low as possible. When financial conditions are favorable, the margins are returned as capital credits to the members.

The assignment is made by applying the percentage of the cooperative's margins (revenues in excess of expenses) to each member's total billing for the year (excluding sales tax). In addition, margins are assigned to Little Ocmulgee EMC by other organizations with which it is associated, such as Cooperative Finance Corp., CoBank, Gresco, Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange and Southeastern Data Corp. The percentage assigned from these associated organizations is assigned to each member each year in the same manner as above.

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} \text{2021 total operating margins +} \\ \text{2021 total associated organizations} \end{array}}{\text{2021 total sales of electric energy}} = \frac{\$ 1,163,951}{\$ 23,257,211} = 0.050046895$$

Little Ocmulgee Electric Membership Cooperative 2021 Patronage Capital Assignment Factors

	Allocation Factor	If your total bills were: (excluding sales tax)		
		\$500	\$1,000	\$2,000
2021 patronage capital assigned for Little Ocmulgee EMC	0.049413626	\$ 24.71	\$ 49.41	\$ 98.83
2021 patronage capital assigned from associated organizations	0.000633269	\$ 0.32	\$ 0.63	\$ 1.27
2021 total patronage capital assigned	0.050046895	\$ 25.02	\$ 50.05	\$ 100.09

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form.

To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) **Mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) **Fax:** (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) **Email:** program.intake@usda.gov.

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