

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER A STORM

North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperative officials are prepared for what is predicted to be a busier than usual tropical weather season.

Forecasters from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have predicted 11 to 15 tropical storms this season with six to nine of those storms developing into hurricanes. Of those, NOAA experts expect two to four of those hurricanes to be Category 3 or greater in strength. A Category 3 hurricane has a wind speed in the range of 111-130 miles per hour. Coastal communities in a Category 3 hurricane experience storm surge of 9 to 12 feet above normal.

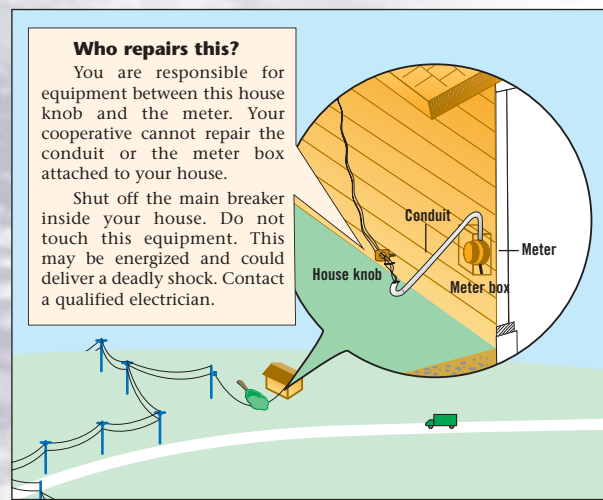
North Carolina's electric cooperatives continue to upgrade their hurricane response and power restoration procedures. New technology has also aided improved response and recovery. After each major storm, cooperative personnel have fine-tuned their power restoration techniques based on real-time lessons learned in each weather event.

Here are some reminders from your electric cooperative and the National Hurricane Center, a division of the National Weather Service.



AFTER THE STORM

- ⚡ Check for electrical damage, such as frayed wires, downed power lines, sparks or the smell of hot or burned insulation. If you find such damage, don't turn your power on until service crews have made repairs.
- ⚡ If power lines and poles are down in your yard or in the street, always treat them as if they were energized and dangerous. Never touch them! Stay away. Call your electric cooperative to report the location so repairs can be made as soon as possible.
- ⚡ An electrician must repair damage inside your house. Your electric cooperative can only hook up power from the pole or underground line to your house. Co-op personnel cannot repair your fuse or breaker box or make repairs on or inside your house.
- ⚡ If your electric service is out, check with your neighbors to see if they have power. If they do, you may have only a blown fuse or a tripped breaker. Never replace a fuse or reset a circuit breaker with wet hands or while standing on a wet (or even damp) surface.
- ⚡ If you're without electricity and want to use a portable generator, make sure you use it in a well-ventilated area. Don't connect the generator to your home's electrical panel or fuse boxes. It may cause electricity to feed back into the power lines, which can endanger linemen and damage electric service facilities.
- ⚡ If your power is out following a storm and you must cook food with Sterno or charcoal, remember to do so outside in a well-ventilated area. Cooking indoors with Sterno or charcoal will produce deadly carbon-monoxide fumes. Replenish your supplies of batteries, bottled water, non-perishable food items and firewood in preparation for future storms as soon as it's reasonably possible.
- ⚡ Helping line crews is appreciated, but working with power lines and electricity requires a high degree of training. In order to restore power with the highest degree of safety, restoration must be accomplished in a certain order using specific procedures. Above all, the hard working men and women restoring your power appreciate your patience and understanding. They are doing everything they can to restore your power as quickly and safely as possible.



BEFORE THE STORM

- ⚡ Make sure flashlights, battery-powered lanterns or other sources of light are readily available.
- ⚡ Make sure flashlight and radio batteries are fresh.
- ⚡ Make sure you have an adequate supply of medicine, first aid supplies and baby items.
- ⚡ Homeowners with wells should draw an emergency water supply in case power to their electric water pumps is interrupted.
- ⚡ Keep a supply of bottled water, non-perishable food items, batteries and firewood on hand.
- ⚡ Make sure that your pets are current on their vaccinations. Pet shelters may require proof of vaccines. Have a current photograph. Keep a collar with identification on your pet and have a leash and a muzzle on hand. Make sure you have your pet's medications.
- ⚡ Consider moving yourself and your family – especially those with special needs – to an alternate location during an extended outage.
- ⚡ If you evacuate, shut off your electricity at the breaker box.

DURING THE STORM

- ⚡ Get inside a building. Stay away from windows. Flying debris can cause injury.
- ⚡ Do not use the phone or run water during lightning storms. Do not stand in water or take a bath or shower. Currents from lightning can enter through plumbing and phone lines.
- ⚡ Don't open freezers and refrigerators any more than absolutely necessary.
- ⚡ Listen to local radio stations for news about outages. Your electric cooperative makes a special effort to report the latest outage news to local radio stations and other media outlets.
- ⚡ Turn off your heating and air conditioning systems. Unplug sensitive electronic appliances such as TVs, VCRs, microwave ovens and computers. This will protect your appliances against power fluctuations that can occur when power is restored.
- ⚡ Turn off your electric range during a power outage. This may prevent possible damage if you're away when the power is restored.
- ⚡ Wait five to 10 minutes before turning on appliances and heating systems after power is restored.