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News Release

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Severe weather is on the way; prepare now for spring storms

(West Point, NE)—Changing seasons bring unsettled weather and many states (including Nebraska) use the spring to observe Severe Weather Awareness Week. Cuming County Public Power District and Safe Electricity remind everyone to be prepared and know how to stay safe during and after the storm.

“You never know when a storm may hit, creating potential electrical hazards for your family,” says Molly Hall, Executive Director of Safe Electricity. “The best solution is to plan ahead and be prepared for the inevitable.”

Safe Electricity reminds everyone of the increased electrocution risks that springtime storms and flooding can cause, and offers safety tips to avoid serious injury or death when dealing with the aftermath of a major storm or disaster.

Before the storm:

- Assemble a kit of essentials, like battery-operated flashlights and radios. Keep a list of emergency phone numbers that includes the electric utility. Be prepared for the possibility of a prolonged outage due to power line and electric equipment damage.
- Fill spare containers with water for washing, and keep a supply of bottled drinking water on hand. Maintain a supply of non-perishable food items, along with a hand opener for canned food.
- Be sure to tune into your local weather station if you suspect severe weather is brewing. Understand the National Weather Service warning classification system. A tornado or severe storm watch means that conditions are favorable for those weather conditions forming. A warning means that dangerous weather conditions are developing and imminent.
- Lightning can travel up to ten miles away from a storm, so seek shelter as soon as you hear thunder.

During an outage, switch off lights and appliances to prevent overloading circuits and damaging appliances when power is restored. Leave one lamp or switch on as a signal for when your power returns.

After the storm:

- When venturing outside after a severe storm, stay away from downed power lines and be alert to the possibility that tree limbs or debris may hide an electrical hazard. Assume that any dangling wires you encounter are electrical, and treat all downed or hanging power lines as if they are energized. Warn others to stay away and contact the electric utility.
- If you are driving and come upon a downed power line, stay in your vehicle, warn others to stay away and contact emergency personnel or electric utility. Also when driving, be careful at intersections where traffic lights may be out. Stop at all railroad crossings, and treat road intersections with traffic signals as a four-way stop before proceeding with caution.
- Before re-entering storm-damaged buildings or rooms, be sure all electric and gas services are turned off. Never attempt to turn off power at the breaker box if you must stand in water to do so. If you can't reach your breaker box safely, call your electric utility to shut off power at the meter.
- Never step into a flooded basement or other area if water is covering electrical outlets, appliances or cords. Be alert to any electrical equipment that could be energized and in contact with water. Never touch electrical appliances, cords or wires while you are wet or standing in water.
- Cleaning up and using water-damaged appliances also carry safety risks. Electric motors in appliances that have been drenched or submerged should be thoroughly cleaned and reconditioned before they are put back into service. It may be necessary to repair or replace electrical appliances or tools that have been in contact with water. Do not use any water-damaged appliance until a professional has checked it out.
- When using a generator, follow all manufacturers' recommendations to avoid tragedy. Keep the generator dry and never plug it into a wall outlet or directly into the home's wiring. This could inadvertently energize the utility lines and injure yourself or others working to restore power.

Learn more about weathering storms safely at www.SafeElectricity.org or www.ccppd.com.

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For more information and videos on electrical safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org. Safe Electricity is a program of the Energy Education Council, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting electrical safety and energy efficiency, and supported by a coalition of hundreds of organizations, including electric utilities, educators and other entities committed to promoting safe use of electricity.