



A MESSAGE FROM:  
**Shane L. Larson,**  
 Chief Executive Officer



## DO YOU HAVE A SPRING PROJECT COMING UP?

# CALL 811 BEFORE YOU DIG!

### IT'S A FACT...

Over the last two years,  
 Rock Energy members have made  
 over 31,000 8-1-1 calls!



For more information about digging safety, as well as  
 WI and IL contact information, see page 18.

**S**pring showers certainly do bring beautiful flowers; however, if you plan to dig on your property but don't call 8-1-1 before you start, not everything may come up roses for you. Even if you think you could get lucky, or that digging one small hole (or two) won't matter, don't take for granted what lines might lurk beneath the soil in your yard or easement.

April is National Safe Digging Month, so Rock Energy wants to take this opportunity to remind you that before you use that post hole digger or other unearthing tools, STOP and call 8-1-1 to request that buried electric, gas, cable and other live lines in or near your yard be marked. The service is free, but digging in an unmarked yard may not be. You might think you don't have time to call and ask yourself, what's the worst that could happen? **YOU COULD BECOME SERIOUSLY INJURED, OR EVEN WORSE.**

Other consequences of blindly digging and taking a chance:

- You could cause a power outage.
- You could hit a gas line and get burned or cause an evacuation in your neighborhood.
- You could be fined.
- If you hit a telephone line or fiber optic line, you might lose your telephone, cable TV, or internet service.
- Worse yet, it could interfere with your neighborhood's emergency assistance technology.

In fact, an underground utility line is damaged once every nine minutes across the nation because someone decided to dig without getting their yard properly marked, according to data collected by Common Ground Alliance. You may think one little hole won't matter, but that's what the person thought who hit a line nine minutes ago.

Take a deep breath, look over your landscaping or fence plans, and call 8-1-1 before you dig. By calling 8-1-1 or your state's digging call center directly, utilities or the companies they contract with will come to your home and mark your yard before you dig.

I also want to remind you that Call811.com lists the name and contact information for each state's digging notification service. The site also lists the advance notice required for marking services, which is usually two days, not including the day you call.

All-in-all, the main message is to simply be aware of what's under the surface of the ground and everywhere else in your yard. By calling 8-1-1, this can be achieved, and you can proceed with your digging project with confidence. As call811.com says, "Know what's below." Then dig safely.

*From everyone here at Rock Energy, we wish you a  
 HAPPY & SAFE SPRING!*

# INSURANCE POLICIES COVER LOSSES FROM POWER OUTAGES

Rock Energy Cooperative works diligently to make sure your electricity and natural gas are there when you need it.

But like all things, nothing is 100 percent guaranteed.

Outages or voltage issues—whether triggered by a storm, lightning, trees, equipment failure, animals, or vehicles hitting power poles—can damage computer equipment, TVs, and other appliances in your home. If an outage occurs due to an act that is out of Rock Energy Cooperative's reasonable control (such as a lightning strike), we do not compensate for any damaged equipment.

However, most homeowner's and business insurance policies cover losses from interruptions caused by lightning, windstorms, and other sources. Make sure you're familiar with your policy and what is covered. Call your agent if you're not sure about your specific coverage.

You can help protect your own equipment by unplugging it during a power outage and by installing surge protection.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

When was your cooling system last serviced? Most manufacturers recommend an annual tune up for your home's cooling system. March is a great time to schedule this service so you can beat the summer rush when the pros are busiest.

A qualified professional can check the amount of refrigerant, accuracy of the thermostat, condition of belts and motors and other factors that can impact the efficiency of your system.

Source: Dept. of Energy



## APRIL 18 Lineman Appreciation Day

Everyday there are men and women who face danger in order to protect our lives and bring us all the conveniences of modern living. **National Lineman Appreciation Day** celebrates those men and women who put their lives at risk to keep the power flowing through our communities.



# SAFEGUARD ELECTRONICS WITH SURGE PROTECTION

A power surge is an unexpected increase in voltage, and it can occur from a variety of sources. Regardless of the cause, power surges can majorly damage electronic devices and equipment in your home. Let's look at common causes of power surges and how you can protect your electronics.

## LIGHTNING

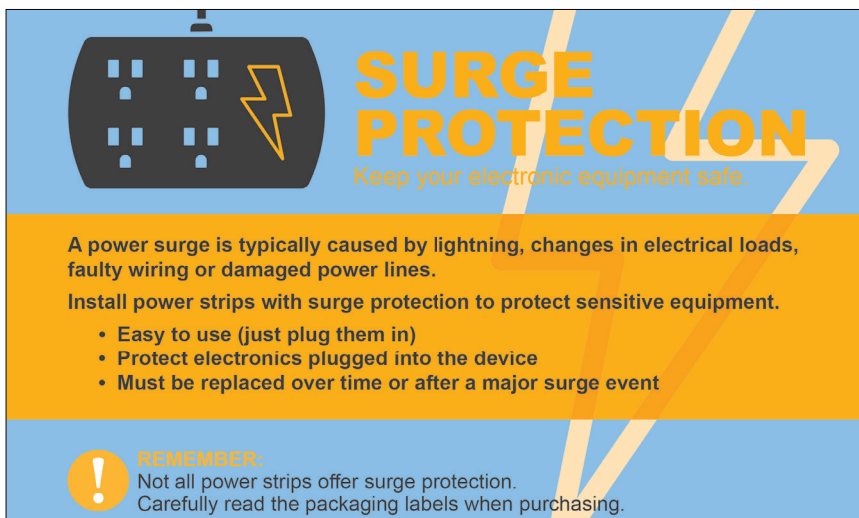
One of the most common causes of a power surge is lightning. Most of us have experienced this during a severe thunderstorm. When lightning strikes an electrical system, the excess current must be channeled somewhere — unfortunately, in many cases, it's sent through a home. Your best bet is to unplug all unused devices and electronics during severe thunderstorms.

## ELECTRIC OVERLOAD

Another common cause of power surges is electrical overload. This happens when devices or appliances are plugged into an outlet that can't handle the required amount of voltage, or if multiple devices are plugged into one outlet through an extension cord. If you're experiencing power surges due to electrical overload, it's time to call a qualified electrician to evaluate your home's circuits and electrical needs.

## FAULTY WIRING

Faulty wiring in a home can also cause power surges. Damaged or exposed wires can cause spikes in voltage, creating a potentially dangerous situation. If you notice signs of faulty wiring, like visible burns on outlets, buzzing sounds from outlets or frequently tripped circuit breakers, your home may be due for electrical wiring repairs and updates.



**SURGE PROTECTION**  
Keep your electronic equipment safe.

A power surge is typically caused by lightning, changes in electrical loads, faulty wiring or damaged power lines.

Install power strips with surge protection to protect sensitive equipment.

- Easy to use (just plug them in)
- Protect electronics plugged into the device
- Must be replaced over time or after a major surge event

**REMEMBER:**  
Not all power strips offer surge protection. Carefully read the packaging labels when purchasing.

## POWER OUTAGES

Surges can also occur after a power outage. Sometimes, when electricity is being restored and reconnected, it's common to experience a quick surge in current. Like advice for a surge caused by lightning, it's best to unplug sensitive electronics during the outage — then wait to plug them back in after power is fully restored.

Aside from unplugging devices when you suspect a power surge, there are other ways you can take additional precautions to protect electronics in your home. For instance, point-of-use surge protection devices, like power strips, can protect electronics during most surges. But remember, not all power strips include surge protection, so read the packaging label carefully before you buy, and don't overload the power strip with too many devices. You can also install specialized electrical outlets that offer additional surge protection. Talk to a trusted electrician to learn more.

# CAPITAL CREDITS GENERALLY NOT TAXABLE

As tax time is approaching, Rock Energy Cooperative members might be wondering if the capital credits they receive are taxable.

Capital credits generally are not taxable for individual members.

Whether your capital credit refund is taxable generally depends on whether or not you claimed your energy bills as a business expense.

For example, a farm or other business claiming 75 percent business use of their energy costs would have to include 75 percent of the cash payment for the capital credits when received as income. The non-business portion is not subject to taxation.

In addition, through your SmartHub account, you can access and review your 2021 capital credit retirement information on your May 2021 billing statement.

Rock Energy suggests that members with specific questions should consult a tax adviser.







# APRIL IS NATIONAL SAFE DIGGING MONTH

An underground utility line is damaged every nine minutes because someone decided to start a digging project before they called 8-1-1. Our land is made up of a complex underground infrastructure of pipelines, wires, and cables. Dig-ins can cause injuries, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, and result in fines and repair costs. So before you reach for the shovel, remember to call 8-1-1, the national call-before-you-dig number to ensure that buried utility lines are marked.

A call to 8-1-1 must be placed before every digging project, from simple landscaping projects like planting trees or shrubs, to building a deck or installing a rural mailbox.

## Here's what happens when you call 8-1-1:

- Your call will be routed to your local Call Center. That's Diggers Hotline in Wisconsin and JULIE (Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators) in Illinois. *NOTE: A reference # will be assigned to your digging project. Keep this handy in case you need to call the Diggers Hotline back for any reason. This will help them to find your project in their system.*
- Wisconsin requires the call to be made three business days before the start of the project, and Illinois law specifies two business days.
- A representative will ask for the location and description of your digging project.
- Utility companies servicing the area then will send a professional locator to the proposed area to mark any buried lines with flags: red, electric; yellow, gas or petroleum; orange, communications; blue or purple, water; and green, sewer or drainage.
- Wait until your official project start date before beginning to dig to make sure all the utilities have been marked.

Don't put yourself in danger, CALL 8-1-1! For more information, go to [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com).

**CHECK OUT REC's VIDEO** Go to [www.rock.coop/info-videos](http://www.rock.coop/info-videos) and check out Rock Energy's "Call Before You Dig" video!

In Wisconsin, your project must begin within 10 days of your official start date. In Illinois, work must begin within 14 days of your locate request and is valid for 28 days.

## 8-1-1 Contact Information:

### NATIONWIDE:

[www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com) or call 8-1-1

### WISCONSIN:

[www.diggershotline.com](http://www.diggershotline.com) or 800-242-8511

### ILLINOIS:

[www.illinois1call.com](http://www.illinois1call.com) or 800-892-0123

## OFFICES CLOSED FOR GOOD FRIDAY

Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Friday, April 15, in observance of Good Friday. We will reopen at 7:30 a.m., Monday, April 18. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekend. Even though our offices are closed, crews are always available 24 hours a day.

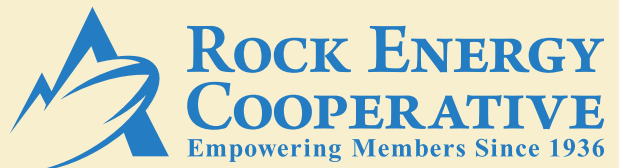
If you need to report a power outage, please call 866-752-4550.



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## GAUGE YOUR HOME'S “HOUSE POWER”

**D**o you have frequently blown fuses or tripped circuit breakers? Do your appliances operate more slowly than they should? Do your lights dim when other appliances and equipment are in use?

If so, you probably have low “house power,” and the problem can usually be traced to your home’s wiring.

The wiring in your house determines how much electricity you can safely use. Low “house power” is a signal that your home doesn’t have adequate wiring to meet your family’s electric needs.

The remedy might not be as expensive as you think. However, you need to consult an experienced electrical contractor to help determine how to gain the “house power” needed in your home.

Call your local Touchstone Energy cooperative today for more information. Safety precautions mean peace of mind.



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