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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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NEWS

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Why Does the Power Blink?

We've all returned home or woken up late for work to see a blinking "12:00" on our digital alarm clock. We then have to reset our digital clocks that don't have battery backups, from microwave ovens to answering machines. Usually, this state of "eternal midnight" was caused by a "blink" in the electrical system. While blinks can be annoying, they show the electrical system is working as designed.

Let's look at blinks. These momentary power interruptions can occur anywhere along a power system—from the generation of electrons at a power plant, across transmission lines to substations, as power travels to distribution electric systems, and on to homes and businesses.

Why blinks?

Blinks occur when a disturbance on the line causes a breaker—which functions much like the breaker panel in your home—to open along any portion of the power system. The breaker usually opens because of a large, quick rise of electrical current. This rise, called a fault condition, occurs for various reasons, such as a tree branch touching a line, lightning striking or a conductor breaking.

When this happens, a relay senses the fault and tells the breaker to open, preventing the flow of power to the problem site. After opening, the breaker quickly closes and permits power to flow through the line with only a short service interruption. The brief delay, which allows the fault to clear, usually lasts less than



two seconds. If the fault clears, every home or business receiving electricity from that power line experiences a blink. This could include thousands of accounts if the breaker protects a transmission line or a substation.

If the fault continues, the breaker reopens, creating a second blink. Triple-shot settings allow the device to reclose a third time, and if the fault is still there, it stays open and electric consumers experience a power outage. Blinks are annoying, but this process protects the line from serious damage by cutting off power to the affected section of the line and isolating the problem until it is repaired.

Reducing the blink's effects

Western Cooperative Electric employs methods to reduce blink frequency. Tree trimming is probably the easiest and most common way.

Technology has also improved service reliability. Western installed an advanced metering infrastructure (AMI), which allows radio frequency communications be-

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tween the meter and the cooperative.

After communications are gathered, Western can send out or redirect a crew to the location of the problem. The area of the outage and number of impacted members are recognized, and member service reps are notified an outage is in progress. This technology results in the minimization of outages and their length, plus more availability of up-to-date information for the consumer.

Mother Nature is a tough opponent, and it's impossible to eliminate outages and blinks altogether. However, frustration with blinks can be reduced with the purchase of an alarm clock equipped with a battery backup. This type of digital clock offers "ride through" ability for momentary outages. It will also keep the correct time and sound an alarm in case of a long-duration outage, provided a charged battery is in place.

As an added benefit, these devices only use the battery in the event of a power interruption.

Blinks affect all electrical equipment, not just digital clocks. If there is a blink during the operation of a computer, the computer may crash and require a reboot. An uninterruptible power supply (UPS) on computers can help prevent information loss. The UPS incorporates surge suppression technology with a battery backup and provides time to save documents and exit the computer properly.

The future of blinks

Western Cooperative Electric operates an active system maintenance program and works hard to identify and fix sources of service interruptions. Even though blinks will never disappear from our electrical energy delivery system, by working together we can minimize effects of interruptions and their frequency.

Operating Your Generator Safely

When the electricity goes out, generators can help you get through until power is restored. However, before ever starting a generator, it is vital you understand how to use one safely.

There are two types of generators for homeowners to choose from: standby and portable. Standby generators are installed directly to the house and are typically powered by natural gas or propane. These generators, with an automatic transfer switch, start automatically when the power goes out. A portable generator is usually gas powered and is movable.

You can power appliances by plugging them into the generator. Your generator should have more output than the wattage of the electronics you will plug into it. This way, the generator will be able to create the extra electricity it takes for the initial power surge. Make sure there is nothing plugged into the generator when you turn it on.

When refueling a generator, make sure the engine is cool to prevent a fire, should the tank overflow. Be sure to keep children and pets away from the generator, which could burn them.

Generators pose electrical risks especially when operated in wet conditions. Use a generator only when necessary during moist conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure and on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it.

Carbon monoxide fumes emitted by the gasoline engine on the generator



GETTY IMAGES/RA3RN

can be deadly. Always operate your portable generator outdoors at least 10 feet from your home. If you are not careful with the installation of a portable or standby generator, you can put the lives of others, including our linemen, in danger because of backfeed—a situation where a generator is feeding electricity back through your electrical system and meter into the power lines.

To prevent backfeed, standby generators should have a transfer safety switch installed by a professional. Portable generators should never be plugged directly into a home outlet or electrical system; use an extension cord to plug appliances into an outlet on the generator for power.

It is recommended that a generator be operated once a month for 10 minutes to ensure it is running properly. Store a standby generator in an easily accessible, weatherproof area. Have enough fuel for a least 24 hours in case of a power outage.

For more electrical safety information, contact Western Cooperative Electric at 785-743-5561.



ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS

Are You Eligible for the Trip of a Lifetime?

All high school juniors whose parents or guardians are members of Western Cooperative Electric are eligible. (Parents or guardians may receive electricity for any type of service—farm, house, cabin, water well). Additional information is also available at www.westerncoop.com.

- ▶ Contestants must complete the application below and return it by Dec. 14, 2018.
- ▶ Contestants will be mailed an entry packet. Finalists will be chosen based on completed application, resume, open book quiz and short essay.
- ▶ Finalists will be interviewed to determine winners on Feb. 3, 2019.

Application for Youth Tour Contest – Due Dec. 14, 2018

To apply for a chance to attend the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour or Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp, please complete the form below and return to Western Cooperative Electric Association Inc., 635 S. 13th St., P.O. Box 278, WaKeeney, KS 67672, by Dec. 14, 2018.

Name of Applicant _____

Phone Number _____ Email _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

School _____ Year in School _____ Date of Birth _____

Name of Parent(s) or Guardian(s) _____

Parent(s) or Guardian(s) Phone Number(s) _____

Western Cooperative Electric Account Number _____

I agree that all information supplied in this application is accurate and true.

Signature of Applicant _____

Show You Care with Safety-Minded Gifts

As you create your holiday gift list this year, consider adding safety-minded gifts as a way to show you care. From a smart doorbell to a smoke detector, a gift that keeps loved ones safe gives peace of mind and could help save lives.

Consider the following tips and gift ideas to help keep everyone on your gift list safer this holiday season and throughout the year:

For adults

- ▶ Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- ▶ A flashlight with extra batteries for emergencies
- ▶ A roadside emergency kit
- ▶ Reflective clothing for runners or walkers
- ▶ Gloves with LED lights or hand-held “knuckle lights” designed for runners
- ▶ A smart doorbell to see who’s at the door while at home and away
- ▶ Gift certificates for home services (home maintenance, such as HVAC inspection or chimney sweeping)
- ▶ A fire extinguisher for the kitchen
- ▶ A pack of GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlets and a gift certificate for a qualified electrician to install them
- ▶ A cozy bed blanket to replace an older electric blanket; those more than 10 years old are often unsafe

- ▶ Aftermarket safety systems for cars that don’t have them, which include features such as forward-collision and lane-departure warnings
- ▶ A rear-view camera and dash cam for vehicles not equipped with them
- ▶ A pet harness for use in a vehicle; make sure it has earned crash-test certification

For kids and youth

- ▶ Age-appropriate gifts (see recommendations on box or toy); children younger than age 3 should not have access to toys with small parts and avoid marbles and small balls for small children
- ▶ Safety gear such as helmets and knee and elbow pads when gifting scooters, roller blades, bikes and other riding toys
- ▶ Hover boards—these units should be compliant with UL safety standards (new hover boards that are UL 2272 certified are fire safe; boards bought before 2016 do not have this certification)
- ▶ Many gaming consoles are equipped with internet browsers and chat features that allow players to communicate with each other, so be aware of these capabilities in any game or electronic device.

For more tips and information, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Let Us Help You Mind Your eBiz-ness

Register for eBiz

1. Go to www.westerncoop.com
2. On Western’s homepage, click the link to eBiz
3. Enter the information requested (shown below)

User Name	<input type="text"/>	Required, at least 8 characters in length.
Password	<input type="text"/>	Required, at least 8 characters long, contain at least an uppercase letter, at least one number, and may not contain any blank spaces.
Re-enter password	<input type="text"/>	
Account number	<input type="text"/>	Required, this is the basic account number.
Phone	<input type="text"/>	This phone number must match the one on file with Western. The error “Did not validate” means you need to provide the co-op with your current contact information.

Western Cooperative Electric now offers eBiz—a member-friendly application to access your account. eBiz offers the following account management tools:

- ▶ See your current billing and billing/payment history;
- ▶ View your daily meter readings from your meter;
- ▶ Pay your bill with a check or card (no processing fee);
- ▶ Pay one time or set up for monthly payments;
- ▶ Use our online bill calculator;
- ▶ View charts and graphs of usage data;
- ▶ Compare months or years of usage;
- ▶ Make account changes;
- ▶ Sign up for email billing notifications;
- ▶ Request service from Western Cooperative; and
- ▶ Store payment options and go paperless.

To create an eBiz account, visit www.westerncoop.com and follow the directions at left.