

Are you safe around

ELECTRICITY?

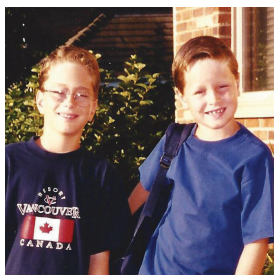
Ameren Illinois
1.800.755.5000
AmerenIllinois.com

TTY Illinois Relay
711

JULIE Underground
Locating
811

Illinois1Call.com

A Battle With Electricity



The day before Easter many years ago, young brothers Brett and Aaron Studer eagerly raced outside for a pretend battle using sticks for swords. Aaron came upon a large green metal box, took the top off and

placed his wet “sword” inside the box. A bright flash engulfed the boys.

The boys ran back to the house screaming in fear. Mrs. Studer rushed to their aid and tried to wipe off the “dirt” on Aaron’s face. The “dirt” turned out to be dead skin from a third-degree burn.

Mr. Studer saw a fire growing outside. When he tried to snuff it out with a metal shovel, the shovel was thrown from his hands because it was an electrical fire that started from dry leaves nearby.

First responders quickly arrived on the scene, cared for the family and put out the fire. Fortunately, Aaron and Brett survived, and Aaron has no permanent scars.

It’s important that children, parents and everyone in our communities know what potential dangers are nearby and take preventative measures to stay safe.

Here’s what everyone should know:

1. Pad-mounted transformers are usually green and found in neighborhoods with underground electric service.
2. Do not open, tamper with, or obstruct access to electrical boxes.
3. Report any damage, such as a hole, missing pin or broken lock, to Ameren Illinois immediately.
4. Know where nearby electrical equipment is located and teach your loved ones how to be safe around it.

The Studer’s story
can be found at
SafeElectricity.org.



Access interactive learning materials for kids at
AmerenIllinois.com/EnergySmartKids.

Tree Pruning — When to Contact a Professional

Fallen trees and branches are a leading cause of power outages and safety hazards. To get to the root of these issues, Ameren Illinois inspects and trims trees along every circuit once every four years.

While Ameren Illinois takes care of the main power lines, the customer is responsible for maintaining trees near the smaller service line that connects to the home. Never attempt to prune trees near power lines yourself. Only qualified line clearance tree contractors are allowed to work near power lines. To request disconnection of energy service so trees can be trimmed safely by a qualified contractor, call Ameren Illinois at **1.800.755.5000**.



Avoid planting trees directly beneath power lines, near poles or too close to electrical equipment.

For more planting tips, go to **MySafeTrees.com**.

Flooding Can Hide Electrical Hazards

Flooding is one of America's most common natural disasters — and it can create hidden hazards related to your energy service. Take extra care following a flood:

- Never step into a flooded basement or other room if water may be in contact with electrical outlets, appliances or cords.
- Never attempt to turn off power at the breaker box if you must stand in water to do so.
- Never use electric appliances or touch electric wires, switches or fuses when you are wet or standing in water.
- Keep electric tools and equipment at least 10 feet away from wet surfaces, indoors and out.

Make sure that neighborhood kids understand that flooded areas are never safe spots to wade in or play.



Metallic Balloons Can Leave Neighborhoods in the Dark

Metallic balloons can do a surprising amount of damage to electrical systems. If they are released and float into a power line or substation equipment, they can cause a surge of electricity that can lead to power outages, fires, and possible injuries.

If you use Mylar balloons at your next party, make sure they are weighted and tied down so they do not float away. When the party's over, puncture the balloons to release any remaining helium before disposing of them. Never tie a metallic balloon to a child's wrist.

If a balloon does get caught in a power line, report it to your local energy company. Never attempt to retrieve it yourself.



Driving Into Danger

After visiting a friend in Kindred, North Dakota, 17-year-old Mary Gehrig began the 30-minute drive home to Fargo on a stormy June night. When she turned onto the county road that would take her home, Mary noticed two white lines in the distance.

As she got closer, she realized that those lines were across the road, in her path, and they were anything but small. “I realized I couldn’t drive over it,” Gehrig recalls.

She slammed on the brakes and her car struck the object, which turned out to be one of two high-voltage transmission power lines downed by the storm. The massive cable damaged the vehicle’s electrical system and stopped Mary’s car in its tracks. Stranded, Mary called her parents, who advised her to remain in the car and call 911.



Had she made the mistake of getting out of her car, Mary could have become the electricity’s path to ground and her story could have ended tragically. Fortunately, as Fire Chief Rich Schock said, “Mary did everything right.”

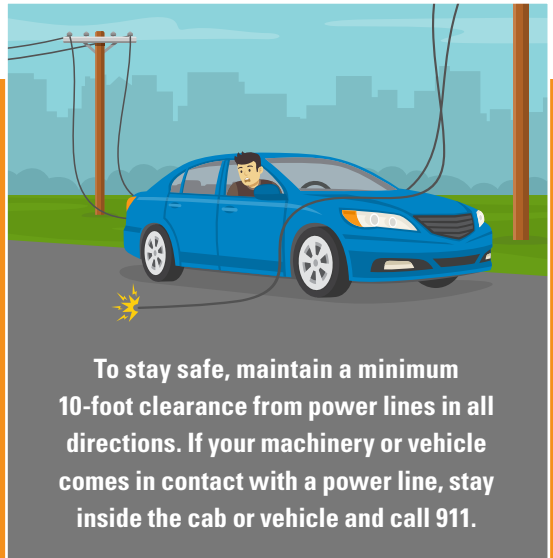
To watch Mary’s story or to learn more, go to SafeElectricity.org.

Stay in the Car and Dial 911

If you are involved in a vehicle accident involving downed power lines, a padmount transformer or other electrical equipment, follow these tips to stay safe:

- Stay in the vehicle and call 911. Be sure to report if a downed line or other electrical equipment is involved.
- Do not get out of the vehicle until electric utility workers say it is safe to exit.
- Warn those involved in the accident to stay put and alert passersby who might approach the scene to stay back.

Exiting the vehicle is the last resort and should only be attempted if the car is on fire or giving off smoke.



To stay safe, maintain a minimum 10-foot clearance from power lines in all directions. If your machinery or vehicle comes in contact with a power line, stay inside the cab or vehicle and call 911.

If this is the case, exit the vehicle by crossing your arms and jumping from the vehicle without touching it. Hop with **both feet together** as far as you can.

GFCIs & AFCIs: Why Your Home Needs Both

Two devices are key to protecting your home and family from electrical hazards:

- **Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters** (GFCIs) monitor the flow of electricity in a circuit. If the GFCI senses an irregularity — for example, if the electric current has made contact with a person — it instantly stops the flow of electricity, preventing an electric shock, burn or electrocution. It's important to have GFCIs in areas where water and electricity could meet, such as bathrooms, kitchens, laundry rooms, garages and outdoor receptacles.
- **Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters** (AFCIs) help prevent electrical fires by sensing when electricity is leaking from damaged or decaying wires in your home's electrical system. The AFCI then shuts electricity off before overheating occurs.

Both devices should be installed by a qualified electrician to make your home safer.

Planning a home improvement project?

Consider Clearances First

Before you begin construction on that new room, deck or garage, consider utility clearances and easements. Remember — all structures must be located a safe distance from overhead and underground utility equipment, and comply with easements and National Electric Safety Code (NESC) requirements. Ask your contractor to check for any utility easements and clearance requirements affecting your property before you break ground.



Dial Before You Dig



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Before you begin any project that involves digging, call JULIE at 811.

This will ensure that potentially hazardous underground public utilities are located and marked, so you can dig safely. The service is free, and it's the law.

Fact vs. Fiction

Myth: All power lines are insulated with a protective coating that prevents shock.

Fact: Most power lines are not insulated. The coating found on lines is for weatherproofing and will not offer any protection from electrical current. Utility crews who work near overhead power lines must wear appropriate safety clothing, use tested safety equipment, and complete training to safely perform their work.



May is National Electrical Safety Month, but make safety a year-round practice. **Learn more at SafeElectricity.org.**

