

Electrical Safety Around the Farm

We use electrical appliances and equipment to perform countless chores and activities around the farm and home every day. But as farmers, with the ever changing environment you work in there a numerous activities that you perform that pose special hazards. It is easy to possibly overlook some items that make their operation safe and reliable. The following are some things to keep in mind as your working and playing around your farm and home.

Overhead Power Lines – Many of your homes and out buildings are supplied electricity through overhead power lines. Assume all overhead wires are live and therefore dangerous if you make contact with them.

- A good rule of thumb is to stay a minimum of 10 feet away from all overhead lines with your body and any objects you may be handling.
- If you're using tall or long objects always look up first to make sure you are a safe distance away from any overhead wires.
- Never lift anything upright without first knowing what's above you.
- If you are using power augers or conveyors to complete your grain and feed handling it is important to realize how high your equipment is and where you're going with it. Always lower it to its lowest setting prior to moving it any distance. LOOK UP to stay safe.
- If there are any trees close to power lines that need to be trimmed or removed please call OPU at 507-451-2480 to see if OPU will do the work for you. If the trees are interfering with or has the potential to damage the power line OPU will remove or trim the tree for free.
- Keep away from areas with HIGH VOLTAGE WARNING and DANGER signs posted.
- Make your children aware of the dangers involved with playing on or around electrical equipment such as power poles, transformers, switch cabinets, fences or substations.
- If a live line is touching your vehicle or equipment, stay in the vehicle and wait for help to arrive. If the vehicle catches fire or if you must get out, jump clear without touching the ground and the vehicle at the same time. Shuffle slowly away keeping contact with the ground and both feet-- don't walk or run.

Extension Cords – Avoid using extension cords whenever possible. Typically cords in an ag environment are exposed to more abuse than if used around the house. If you must, try to follow the below tips to make their use safer.

- Do not place electric cords under rugs or where they can be walked on or damage can go unnoticed. Overloaded cords can also heat up quickly when placed under a rug causing a fire hazard.
- Check for cords that are broken, frayed, damaged or tied in knots, or that have melted insulation. Have them repaired or replaced immediately. Double check if they have been in areas where livestock may have been able to chew or crush the cords.
- Do not run cords where they may come into contact with items that may become combustible, such as hay, grain dust, etc..
- Use extension cords with three-pronged plugs for appliances that require grounding. Do not use a three prong adapter and never remove the third prong to create a two pronged plug.
- Insert and remove plugs by grasping the plug. Pulling on the cord could damage it. Be careful not to let fingers touch the metal prongs.
- Avoid kinking, twisting or crushing the cord.
- Keep cords away from heat and water.
- Use properly sized (both wire size and length) extension cords to handle the load that you are using. Remember that the longer that cord needed the larger the wire size needs to be.

Electric Space Heaters –

- Use only appliances with the Underwriters' Laboratories (UL) label. This label shows that the products have been safely tested.
- It's important to keep all combustible materials such as, paper, curtains, and furniture away from the heating source.
- Don't hang clothes to dry on or near your heater, heating vent or hot plate.
- Do not place the heater in a high traffic area where it could accidentally be tipped over. Only use heaters that will automatically turn off if tipped over.
- Unplug the heater when not in use.

Electrical Outlets –

- Do not overload an outlet with too many lamps or appliances.
- Put safety covers over unused electric outlets. This is particularly important if you have children in your home. Never let children play around outlets.
- Use Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) electrical outlets in locations that are near water sources such as bathrooms, kitchens, laundry rooms, garages or the outdoors.

Electricity and Water –

- Electric appliances/equipment and water can be a lethal combination. If electrical equipment falls into water or is saturated by rains, if you touch electrical equipment with wet hands or while standing in water, you risk severe electric shock and possibly death.
- Never use any electric appliances, radios (except small battery-powered ones), or TV's near sinks, toilets or bathtubs.
- Always dry your hands before touching any electric equipment.
- Keep the floor around your electric equipment clean and dry.
- Unplug small appliances when washing them. Never immerse appliances that are not designed for such cleanings in water. This could damage them and give you an electric shock.
- Always verify that the extension cord that you may be using is high and dry and not running through a puddle or other wet area.

General Electrical Safety –

- Check all electrical appliances and equipment prior to use for corrosion and overall cleanliness. If these conditions exist there is a greater chance of overheating or shorting that may cause a fire or dangerous shock.
- Unplug small appliances when washing them. Never immerse appliances such as rice cookers or crock pots in water. This could damage them and give you an electric shock.
- If you have a breaker or fuse that frequently blows have a qualified electrician assess your electric loads to make sure you do not have a potentially dangerous overloaded circuit.
- If an appliance sparks, smokes or shocks, unplug it and do not use it until it has been repaired.
- Unplug irons and heaters when you are finished using them and let them cool before storing.
- Gasoline and other flammable liquids should never be used indoors, and should be stored in an approved container, away from children. Flammable liquids should never be stored in proximity of an ignition source such as an open flame or electrical appliance or fixture.