

The Spotlight



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March 2023

BE PREPARED FOR SPRING STORMS

Lightning from thunderstorms kills more people each year than tornadoes or hurricanes, according to the American Red Cross. As spring arrives, make sure you're prepared to handle storms that come with the changing season. Follow these tips from the Red Cross to stay safe.

STAY AWAY FROM DOWNED POWER LINES. Assume that all downed lines are energized. Electricity could still be flowing through them. Report them immediately to PIE&G at 1-800-423-6634.

HEAR THUNDER? HEAD INSIDE. If you can hear it, you could be in danger from lightning. The National Weather Service recommends you stay indoors at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder. If you're outside and can't seek shelter indoors, avoid high ground, water, tall isolated trees, and metal objects like bleachers or fences.

UNPLUG YOUR ELECTRONICS. Avoid using electrical items and telephones, which can carry power surges. Keep a battery-powered TV or radio on hand for weather updates.

DELAY OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES. If conditions are right for a thunderstorm, postpone the baseball game and stay inside - it doesn't have to be raining for lightning to strike.

Assemble Emergency Kit

- Water: one gallon per person, per day
- Non-perishable, ready-to-eat foods
- Manual can opener
- Flashlight & fresh batteries
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio (preferably NOAA weather radio) & extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Seven-day supply of prescription medicine
- Copies of personal documents
- Cell phone with charger
- Emergency contact information
- Cash

HOME HEATING CREDITS

PIE&G accepts 'Energy Drafts' issued to members eligible for a Home Heating Credit if it is used to pay a home heating bill, and the name on the energy draft matches the name on the account. If the draft is issued in two names, both parties must sign off to endorse payment.

Visit www.michigan.gov/mdhhs and follow the links under the Assistance Programs tab to Emergency Relief: Home, Utilities & Burial, and click on "Heat and Utilities" for more information.



PIE&G will be closed on **Good Friday, April 7**. Regular office hours will resume on Monday, April 10.

Access your account anytime using SmartHub at pieg.com, or download our free SmartHub mobile app. You may also use our 24-hour drop box or free phone service to make payments or report readings anytime by calling 1-866-999-4571.



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PORTABLE GENERATOR SAFETY

Portable electric generators can provide a good source of power, but can become deadly if improperly installed or operated. Always take care when using generators. Do not connect generators directly to household wiring. Power from generators can back-feed along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including utility line workers making repairs. A qualified, licensed electrician should install your generator to ensure that it meets local electrical codes.

Other tips:

- **Make sure your generator is properly grounded.**
- **Keep the generator dry** (away from moisture or water).
- **Check extension cords** to insure they are rated for the load and are free of cuts, worn insulation, and have three-pronged plugs.
- **Do not overload the generator.**
- **Do not operate the generator in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces.** Generators can produce high levels of carbon monoxide very quickly, which can be deadly.
- **Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI)** to help prevent electrocutions and electrical shock injuries.



ENERGY THEFT - ILLEGAL AND DANGEROUS!

Energy theft is generally classified as any interference with a utility's ability to bill a customer. Energy theft includes tenants who fail to transfer the account into their name upon move in and continue taking service in the previous tenant's name.

Unauthorized utility connections ("meter tampering") is the most dangerous kind of energy theft that poses serious safety risks resulting in fires, explosions, shock or burn injuries and even death. These illegal and hazardous connections endanger everyone – the person making the illegal connection and anyone nearby, including utility workers. Tampering may also cause damage to surrounding property.

Michigan law aims to deter unauthorized use or connections of electric and natural gas while protecting consumers from increased utility costs related to energy theft. Additionally, the law sets penalties for the assault or interference with a utility worker or contractor performing his or her duties. The offenses range from a misdemeanor to a felony punishable by imprisonment for up to 5 years or up to a \$5,000 fine, or both.

PIE&G will take immediate action to shut off service where unsafe and unauthorized use of electric or natural gas service is found. Reconnection will be on hold until all costs are paid, and, the Co-op may also pursue criminal prosecution against the tenant or property owner where the energy theft occurred.

Sources: <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-750-383a>, <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-750-383a>, and <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-750-81e>.



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Presque Isle Energy Optimization programs and incentives are applicable to Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op electric service locations only. Incentive applies to qualified items purchased and installed between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023. Other restrictions may apply. For complete program details, visit pieg.com.

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