

# The Spotlight



## What's Inside

- Be Prepared for Storms
- Energy Theft – Illegal & Dangerous
- Safety Using Portable Generators

March 2020

### 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. 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 an emergency preparedness kit with:

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

### 2020 CENSUS - YOUR RESPONSE MATTERS

The census results help determine how billions of dollars in federal funding flow into states and communities each year (health clinics, fire departments, schools, roads and highways). The results also determine how many seats in Congress and Electoral College votes each state gets. It's mandated by the U.S. Constitution and the U.S. has counted its population every 10 years since 1790.

In mid-March, households will begin receiving official Census Bureau mail with details on how to respond. By April 1, every home will receive an invitation to participate. You can respond online, by phone, or by mail. From May – July, census takers will begin visiting homes that haven't responded to the 2020 Census to help make sure everyone is counted. For more information go to [2020Census.gov](https://2020Census.gov).



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## HOME HEATING CREDITS

**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](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs) and follow the links under Assistance Programs to Emergency Relief: Home, Utilities & Burial/Energy & Weatherization for more information.

## ENERGY THEFT IS ILLEGAL & 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.

Source: [www.legislature.michigan.gov](http://www.legislature.michigan.gov)

## PORTABLE GENERATORS

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.

# HAPPY Easter!



PIE&G will be closed on Good Friday, April 10.

The office will be open for business again on Monday, April 13.

Access your account anytime on your PC or tablet at [pieg.com](http://pieg.com), or using the free SmartHub mobile app. You may also pay or report readings anytime by calling 1-866-999-4571.

## Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op

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