



Fall checklist: Check for safety, maintenance issues

The blistering summer heat isn't far behind us, but it won't be long before you're turning on the heater and your house is full of company for the holidays.

In preparation for the cooler months, you're encouraged to head off any potential problems by scheduling maintenance and safety checks for your home's heating and electrical devices now. Here's where to start:

Furnace—A qualified HVAC tech should do a biannual check of your system: once in the fall for your heating system and again in the spring for air conditioning. Before you turn on the heat, make sure your system is in good working condition. The tech can spot problems before they ruin your system or shut down when your house is full of company.

Thermostats—If your home doesn't have a programmable thermostat, you could be paying more to heat and cool your home than you



have to. Programmable thermostats automatically turn the heat up or down, depending on the times of day your family is home or away.

Ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs)—A licensed electrician can install GFCIs in your bathroom, kitchen, and laundry room, and near hot tubs, pools and under windows. All of those areas have the potential to get wet, and a GFCI will shut off

the electricity to an appliance when it does get wet.

Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors—If you don't have them near all bedrooms in your home, it's time to install them. Then, check them twice a year to make sure they're still working and that they have fresh batteries.

Overloaded outlets—You can overload an electrical circuit by plugging in an appliance that uses a heavy amount of electricity into a circuit that is designed for a smaller load. This may include a range, dishwasher, refrigerator, or even some entertainment systems and exercise equipment. You can also overload a circuit by using a power strip to plug in too many appliances into a single outlet. Overloading an outlet could cause a fire. Be sure to ask a licensed electrician to inspect your home for potential circuit overloads.

Conserve energy as weather cools

It's tempting to turn the heat on as soon as the weather starts to cool down in the fall. But holding off for a few weeks until you really need to rely on heat can keep your energy bills low.

If you must turn the heat on during the early fall:

- Set it no higher than 68 degrees. This will make your indoor air comfortable without wasting energy.
- Move furniture and drapes away from warm air registers and baseboard heaters so they don't block the heat from circulating. The more free

the air flow, the lower you can set your thermostat.

- Close the flue damper of your wood-burning fireplace. In fact, consider fitting an electric fireplace into it so you can enjoy a light show without sending heated air up the chimney.
- Have an HVAC pro inspect your heating system before it gets too cold outside. Regular maintenance can prevent an expensive, inconvenient problem later in the winter when it would be uncomfortable to go even a day without a working heating system.



- Caulk indoor openings on external walls, like around the areas where the cable and phone lines come into the house, and around penetrations for water pipes and sewer lines. Sealing those openings can keep your heated air in and the cool air out.

2022 Walter Harrison Scholarship

Sumter EMC is currently accepting applications for the prestigious Walter Harrison Scholarship, a program sponsored by the EMCs in Georgia. Created in 1985 by the board of directors of Georgia EMC, the \$1,000 scholarship pays tribute to the late Walter Harrison, a pioneer in the rural electricity movement.

In 2022, a Walter Harrison Scholarship will be awarded to 14 students. The scholarship is merit-based and available to any college-level student. A scholarship committee comprised of directors and managers of Georgia's EMCs will evaluate students on a number of criteria, such as grade point average, SAT scores, academic standing, scholastic honors, community involvement, and financial need.



The application process is underway, and students for the scholarship must be accepted or enrolled in an accredited two- or four-year university or technical institute. They must also complete a two-page application and submit an autobiographical sketch that includes a preview of his or her

future plans. Finally, to be eligible for the scholarship, students and their families must be members of Sumter EMC and reside in the Co-op's service area.

"Participating in the Walter Harrison Scholarship program is one of the many ways we invest in our local community," says Andrea Walker, Vice President of Marketing and Administration at Sumter EMC. "We recognize the growing cost of education, and we are happy to play a part in helping members pursue their dream of a college education."

Scholarship applications are available online at www.sumteremc.com/walter-harrison-scholarship or by calling Mary-Margaret Fox at (229) 924-8041 or (800) 342-6978. Scholarship applications must be submitted to Sumter EMC no later than January 14, 2022.

Keep objects off electric cooperative poles

Sumter EMC's linemen are well trained and very dedicated men who take tremendous pride in serving you. You can help protect them by not turning our utility poles into obstacle courses with tacks, nails, and staples from posted signs, posters, notices, or

mounted recreational equipment.

Tacks, nails, and staples driven into Sumter EMC utility poles can puncture a linemen's rubber safety gloves and leave them vulnerable to electrocution. Linemen whose climbing hooks hit a nail instead of sinking

securely into wood may also fall from the pole and sustain serious injuries. Remember: When a lineman must unfasten his safety harness to climb above an obstacle on a utility pole, he's working without a net. In addition, when linemen have to remove objects from poles in order to climb them during an outage, it takes longer to restore your power.

Sumter EMC linemen climb the poles in all weather conditions and at all hours of the day or night to maintain and repair the equipment that brings you safe, reliable electric power. These dedicated men face enough danger in their efforts to keep your electric power on, so please help eliminate additional hazards by not posting signs, posters, and notices or mounting recreational equipment on our utility poles.



UTILITY POLES ARE NOT BULLETIN BOARDS

Think before you post that sign. Staples, nails, and tacks used to hang signs and flyers create dangerous obstacles for electric lineworkers. Their jobs are dangerous enough. Help us keep them safe!

Sumter Electric Membership Corporation is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Don't let Turkey Day gobble up electricity

Our use of electricity soars on Thanksgiving Day while the oven, stove, refrigerator and even our heating system go into overdrive as we spend extra time cooking and inviting family into our homes.

Don't spoil the holiday fun worrying about energy costs. Instead, make an effort to conserve energy even as you overuse your appliances, lights, and heat.

Here are some tips:

- If your dining room has an older chandelier that doesn't use compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), dim the brightness by at least 10%. If it doesn't have a dimmer switch, install one.
- Cook as many dishes at the same time as possible. Put two or three dishes in the oven together if their recipes call for the same temperature. That way, you can turn the oven off sooner.
- Lower your home's thermostat before you put the turkey in the oven. The heat that the oven and stovetop emit—along with the heat that having extra people in a house creates—will keep your home warm enough without cranking up the thermostat, even if it's cold outside.
- Cook what you can in the microwave or crockpot. They use less energy than the oven.
- Use a dishwasher instead of cleaning dishes by hand. Dishwashers use less energy and water than hand-washing.



Oven-Roasted Vegetable Hash with Farm Eggs

Recipe courtesy of Georgia Grown



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- 2 cups sweet potatoes, medium dice**
- 1/2 cup multicolored peppers, medium dice**
- Olive or pecan oil, as needed**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- Garlic powder, to taste**
- Smoked or regular paprika, to taste**
- 1 cup Vidalia onion, medium dice**
- 1 cup mushrooms, quartered**
- 1/2 cup grape tomatoes, halved**
- 4 fresh farm eggs, poached or fried just before serving**

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Combine sweet potatoes and peppers in a medium bowl. Drizzle with a little olive or pecan oil, tossing to coat. Sprinkle salt and pepper, and a small amount of garlic powder and paprika over vegetables. Toss again to distribute spices. Spread vegetables on baking sheet. Bake 20 to 25 minutes, or until tender. Set sweet potatoes and peppers aside.

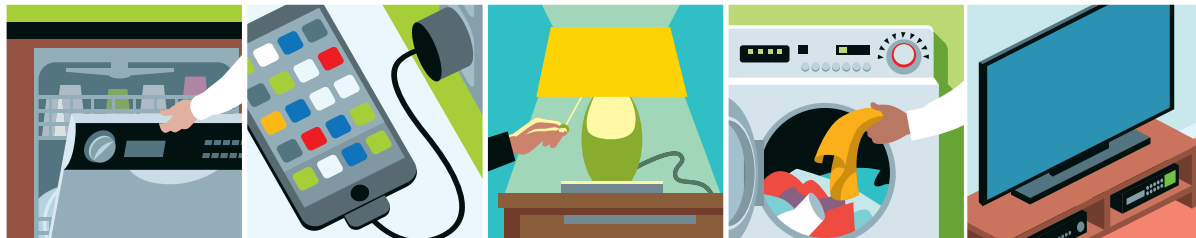
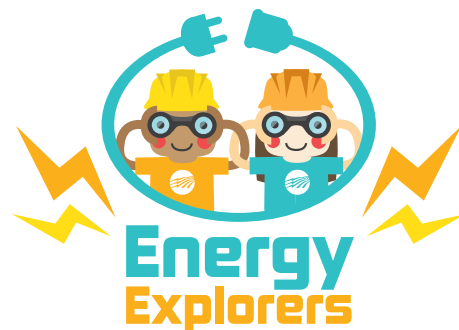
Repeat procedure with Vidalia onion, mushrooms, and grape tomatoes. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, or until tender.

Divide all vegetables between 4 ramekins or dishes. Top each dish with a poached or fried egg. *Serves 4.*

ENERGY SAVINGS FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Saving energy at home can help your family save money and help our environment. Test your energy-efficiency knowledge by completing this fill-in-the-blank activity.

Tip: Use the word bank for help. Don't forget to check your answers in the key below.



1. Turning off the tap water while brushing your teeth can save up to four _____ of water per minute.
2. Energy vampires like TVs and phone chargers consume _____ even when they're not in use. Turn these devices off to save energy.
3. Turning off _____ every time you leave the room saves energy.
4. Wash clothes in _____ water to reduce the load on your water heater.
5. LED light bulbs typically use 75% less energy than _____ light bulbs.
6. To save energy, only run full loads when running the _____.

Word bank:

incandescent	dishwasher
electricity	gallons
lights	cold

Answer key: 1) gallons 2) electricity 3) lights 4) cold 5) incandescent 6) dishwasher