



Enhancing lives by promoting safe and efficient use of electricity

Timely Electricity Education Gives Four Indiana Families a Happy Ending
Know what to do in case your vehicle brings down a power line

(MONTICELLO, Ind.) – When teenagers Lee Whittaker and Ashley Taylor saw a power line safety demonstration at their high school, they never dreamed their new knowledge would be put to the test. Five days later, they and two classmates were in a car that crashed into a utility pole, bringing live power lines to the ground.

Fortunately, they heeded the advice safety expert Kyle Finley had presented in his Live Line Demo program. All four survived because they knew the right actions to take. Others who don't have that knowledge are not as fortunate.

Safe Electricity's 2010 Teach Learn Care TLC campaign strives to increase awareness about the dangers when power lines are brought down in car accidents.

Whittaker and Taylor are sharing their story as the centerpiece of the campaign. "That information saved my life and my friends' lives," said Lee Whittaker.

"You have to remember that you can't smell, hear or see electricity, but the power in that line is tremendous and can be deadly," Finley said. "The safest place after a crash is *inside the vehicle*, and the best thing you can do for a loved one who is trapped is to stay back and call the utility to disconnect power to the line."

There were injuries when the car the teens were traveling in crashed into the utility pole, bringing a power line down on the car, but they knew not to get out and informed those who approached the scene to keep their distance. They waited more than 30 minutes for line crews to arrive and deactivate the power line.

And they are grateful to their local Indiana utility, White County REMC, who sponsored Finley's program for their school and other schools across the region. White County REMC, like more than 300 utilities, is a Safe Electricity program partner committed to safety education and outreach.

According to the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration, in 2008 almost 2000 people were killed in collisions involving utility poles. There are tens of thousands of incidents each year in which power poles are struck by cars or large equipment. Each one of these accidents has the potential to bring down power lines. Without awareness of the right moves to make, surviving the accident itself might not be enough to stay alive.

In the vast majority of those accidents, inside the car is the safest place to be. Only in the rare instance of fire should people exit the car. Then, they must know how to do so *safely*, jumping free and clear of the vehicle, landing with feet together and hopping away. It's difficult to get out without creating a path for current to flow, which is why one should get out only if forced to.

“When people are involved in a car accident, electricity is usually the last thing on anyone’s mind,” Safe Electricity Executive Director Molly Hall said. “We’re often more concerned about whether anyone was injured, or how badly the vehicle is damaged. We often forget that by exiting the vehicle, we’re risking bodily exposure to thousands of volts of electricity from downed power lines.”

Ashley and Lee called Finley soon after the accident to thank him for educating students about electrical safety hazards and providing information that saved their lives.

To learn more about the teens’ experience and power line safety during car accidents, see the video on www.SafeElectricity.org. Visitors can also watch a streamed live power line demonstration, just like the one the Indiana teens saw at their school.

Safe Electricity is a public awareness program of the Energy Education Council (www.EnergyEdCouncil.org), a registered 501 (c) 3 non-profit dedicated to promoting electrical safety and energy efficiency. Council members include hundreds of electric utilities, energy-related organizations, educators and others who share in this mission.

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