

Power outages can frustrate computer users; surge protection and battery backup can help

As a computer user, you have probably experienced the frustration of having your power supply suddenly flicker or go off completely with a resulting loss of data.

Rapid changes in the amount of electricity your computer needs to operate properly can result in damaged circuitry, loss of important data and irritation.

What can you do to protect your computer from power fluctuations and outages?

Equipment is available for home or office use that is designed to eliminate or filter out voltage fluctuations and provide a back-up supply of power should your electricity go off.

Protector or suppressor devices provide protection from brief but intense voltage increases. This type of equipment may save your computer's life if a lightning bolt hits nearby and enters your home's wiring system.

According to Sherman Phillips, Clay Electric's manager of Energy Services, a surge protector's response time to incoming power surges is a critical factor to consider when choosing a unit.

The faster the response time, the better the unit is at preventing the power surge from entering your computer and causing damage.

News Notes

POWER OUTAGE MAP - Internet users can now view the general location and approximate number of power outages on Clay Electric's lines by visiting clayelectric.com. The outage map also allows users to view outage information system-wide or by county.

The information is based on outages reported by Clay Electric members and is automatically updated approximately every five minutes. While the method for determining the extent of an outage is quite accurate, the information presented is an estimation and may not reflect the actual number without power.

Also consider the amount of power the unit can dissipate when a surge occurs. Cheaper units that can't handle higher surge levels may not provide the protection you need. Surge protectors can vary in price from \$40 to over \$120.

But it can be the loss of data, not the equipment damage, that causes concern among computer users.

Phillips advises that if you can't shut down your computer during periods when power interruptions are likely (such as during intense lightning storms), then an Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS) may be for you. A UPS system operates with a battery backup that supplies instant power to your computer should the outside voltage suddenly drop. Because the back-up system takes over quickly, your computer doesn't notice. Battery backup systems can vary widely in cost.

If the expense of a battery backup system is too much for your budget, consider saving and/or copying your data frequently. If the data you are keeping is extremely important, you may also want to consider making copies or using an external hard drive.

In conclusion, if power surges and outages concern you, you may want to invest in surge protectors and battery backup systems.

Power Line is an informational publication of Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc. It is distributed monthly with members' billing statements. If you have questions or comments about the Power Line publication, contact Editor Kathy Richardson at P. O. Box 308, Keystone Heights, FL 32656; e-mail: KRichardson@clayelectric.com.

Clay Electric also publishes the Kilowatt six times a year (January, March, May, July, September and November). The Kilowatt is the official voice of Clay Electric and has been published continuously since 1948 as an informational and educational service for co-op members.

Clay Electric's website (<http://www.clayelectric.com>) offers online services such as payments, and information about the co-op's programs and services. Members can also write their own ads online to be published on the website's Trading Post. To enter your ad on the Trading Post, you must use your Clay Electric customer number which is printed on your electric bill statement.

Clay Electric's Board of Trustees will meet on July 26 beginning at 12:30 p.m. in Keystone Heights.

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The Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc. _____

Power Line

July 2012

Co-op members have a new opportunity for political input

Do you vote? If you do, then you're concerned about who represents you in government. And you also know the folks we elect to public office make decisions that can affect our daily lives.

How much we pay for essential commodities like food, clothing, gasoline, and even electricity, is affected by actions taken by our elected officials. It's likely you would support candidates who choose to help Clay Electric and its efforts to provide you with reliable and affordable electricity.

Groups of citizens learned years ago that their collective voices were often heard by lawmakers above the voice of single citizens. Political action committees were formed to provide groups of like-minded citizens with the ability to raise funds and help elect lawmakers who were willing to listen to their concerns.

Employees at Clay Electric and at electric cooperatives across America support a political action committee called the Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE). For more than 40 years, ACRE has been working to support candidates for both the Florida and the U.S.

See other side

 **Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc.** _____

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

MEMBER SERVICES

AUTOMATIC MONTHLY PAYMENT PLAN

Allows your monthly electric bill payment to be automatically deducted from your bank account on the due date. Sign up online (clayelectric.com) or call your local district office.

ONLINE ACCOUNT INFORMATION

Visit the Clay Electric website (clayelectric.com) and access your account information:

- View your bill statement
- Make a one-time payment online
- View current charges
- View account balance
- View billing history
- View estimated meter reading dates
- Request emailed bill statements (Clay eBill)

PROJECT SHARE - Help others by designating a tax-deductible amount to be added to your electric bill or make a one-time donation.

REMOTE METER READING (RMR) - Enables a co-op meter reader to obtain the meter reading without entering the homeowner's property. The monthly charge is \$3.95.

ENERGY SMART REBATE PROGRAM - Offers rebates for members who install additional insulation in their homes, or who install a high efficiency heat pump or solar water heating system.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY LOANS - Available for the purpose of installing certain energy efficiency measures, including metal roofing and solar water heaters.

SURGEBLASTER - High quality surge protection equipment at a low monthly lease.

LONG DISTANCE PHONE SERVICE - Clay has contracted with TransWorld Network Corp. (TWN) to offer members competitively priced long distance phone service. Call (877) 877-CLAY (2529) for more information.

PAYMENT STATIONS - Clay has contracted with Fidelity Express to offer payment stations for paying your electric bill at various businesses in the co-op's service area. Fidelity Express charges \$1.50 for each transaction. A list of payment locations is available online (clayelectric.com) and at your local district office.

Co-op Owners for Political Action

From the cover

Senate and House who understand and support electric cooperatives and their consumer-owners.

For the first time, Clay Electric is offering its members an opportunity to join a political action committee called Co-op Owners for Political Action (COPA). Membership in COPA is made up entirely of members of electric cooperatives across America. By joining COPA, you become part of a strong grassroots network of citizens concerned about the long-term success of the electric cooperative program. Maintaining our presence in the political process is instrumental to the future of the electric cooperative program and the communities it serves in these unpredictable times.

A regular annual membership in COPA is only \$25. The cost of memberships can be broken down into small monthly payments and added to your electric bill statements. For a \$25 membership, that's \$2.08 per month. COPA also offers a Century Club membership level (\$100 per year or \$8.33 per month). For truly dedicated members, COPA offers a President's Club membership for \$500 (\$41.66 per month).

To participate, fill out the enclosed special Authorization Form and place it in the mail. No postage is necessary.

We hope you will consider joining this program. The most important benefit you receive as a member of COPA is a voice in helping elect state and federal officials who will support your cooperative and your community. In addition, you will receive quarterly issues of the ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action Report, which includes legislative alerts, profiles of cooperative leaders, and other timely features.

Together, we will continue to fight for a viable environment for electric cooperatives and the quality of life of the people and communities cooperatives serve.

Here's some additional information we'd like to share about COPA:

Are contributions to COPA tax-deductible?

No. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has ruled that all political contributions, such as those to the ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action program, are not tax-deductible.

Where does my contribution go?

With the exception of a small federal tax payment of less than 1 percent, all contributions to ACRE COPA go directly to the campaigns of candidates for political office. In addition, a portion of your contribution (about half) may be refunded to the Florida electric cooperative PAC to support candidates for state office.

Who determines how these contributions are made?

ACRE follows established procedures for making contributions to candidates running for political office. Factors that determine financial support include the candidate's position on issues critical to electric cooperatives, as well as his or her votes and public statements on these issues; the candidate's committee assignments and leadership positions and his or her relative importance to cooperatives; and a candidate's financial need and the strength of his or her opponent. The candidate's political affiliation is never taken into account.

Do I really make a difference?

Clay Electric's ability to provide its members with excellent service and affordably priced power can be negatively affected by rules and regulations passed by our elected officials, so it's vitally important that we elect the right people into political office. The personal dedication of Clay's members to stand together as part of a powerful grassroots network that promotes policies that help secure the future of electric co-ops and the many families they serve is very important. This is an opportunity to make a huge difference. Please consider it!

All contributions to ACRE are strictly voluntary and will be used for political purposes. Contribution guidelines are suggestions only. You may contribute more or less than the recommended amount. You may refuse to contribute without reprisal.