



# When it comes to safety, Momma knows best

Along with warmer temperatures, the month of May brings a very special day set aside for us to recognize our mothers and the vital role they play in our lives.

At an electric cooperative like Southern Pine, the month of May is also set aside to acknowledge the importance of safety throughout the industry. While electricity has changed our lives for the better, it also poses a serious threat to the life of line workers and to the public if safety precautions are not followed. While thinking about what to write for this month, I decided the connection between recognizing our mothers and the need for safety seems perfect.

I cannot think of another person in my life who cares more about my safety

than my mother (Momma). As a young boy, it was one of the most annoying interferences to my ability to have a good time. I didn't see anything wrong with catching snakes or besting my friend in a bottle-rocket war.

One of my fond memories as a teenager was making a direct hit on the string of Black Cat firecrackers hanging from the coat pocket of my church youth director. I never thought a man his size could jump that high!

Momma did not find any humor in what I did, and today as a parent, I understand why. I realize now how bad of an idea that was and how fortunate we were that no one was hurt. My mother had her hands full with keeping me out of harm's way.

Mothers have a default setting wired deeply within to keep children away from harm. It cannot be changed or deterred. It is a presence of mind that puts safety as priority number one.

That mindset is what we at Southern

Pine Electric seek in protecting the members of our cooperative family. We have learned the hard way that complacency and the human desire to take shortcuts leads to disaster. A common statement heard in this business is every safety rule is written in blood. If that is so, why does it take a person being seriously injured or killed to remind us how important it is to honor the rules that are put in place to make sure we return home to our families?

Similar to a mother's feelings when her child chooses to break a rule, we have supervisors and safety directors that do all they can to teach and cultivate a safe work environment. Sometimes individuals make bad decisions despite those efforts.

We also spend a great deal of time communicating with our members about the danger of power lines, especially during bad weather that causes outages. These energized lines are unforgiving.

As adults, we all know that our

decisions affect our families. How many times do we overlook the small things and allow ourselves or one another to take shortcuts? Whether it is Dad demonstrating safety to his son by wearing his safety glasses in his shop or Mom demonstrating to her daughter that the text message while driving can wait, there are plenty of opportunities to cultivate a culture of safety.

While this is not the traditional acknowledgment of mothers on their special day, being safe is a mother's greatest desire for her child. She teaches them, watches over them, guides and protects them, and then lets them go to make their own decisions. Honoring her efforts to keep us safe by making better decisions is one of the highest tributes we can pay to the wonderful women that gave us life.

This Mother's Day, I would ask that you join us at Southern Pine in adapting that special mindset that puts safety as priority number one.

# Our goal is to send linemen home safely

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association has deemed May as National Electric Safety Month. According to *USA Today*, electrical line work is considered one of the 25 most dangerous jobs in the United States. In 2017 alone, there were 45 fatalities and 61 injuries nationwide in the workplace related to electricity. This accounts for an average of one death every eight days, and accidents every 3.5 days.



Wes Lee  
Safety Coordinator

The saddest part is most of these injuries are in fact preventable. Unfortunately, a lineman at Prentiss County Electric Power Association, in Booneville, was tragically killed recently

while restoring power after an evening thunderstorm. So, in an industry that's so dangerous, what is Southern Pine doing to try to prevent such incidents?

In January 2018 we launched an initiative called Zero by Choice. The entire campaign is based on the premise of going one million man-hours without a lost-time incident. As I'm writing this article, we are currently at approximately 225,000 hours with no injury to report.

In an industry that's so dangerous, is it even possible to reach such a milestone? I firmly believe that we can and will reach our goal, but at the end of

the day as much as we want to reach this goal, it's all about the safety and well-being of our employees.

Zero by Choice may seem like just a catchy phrase, but it was carefully chosen. To reach this goal, we will need all our employees, not just our lineman, to make a conscious effort daily to continually be attentive, to not take short-cuts and to be aware of hazards for not only themselves but their coworkers alike. We will all have to make a "Choice" to do these things daily.

As I mentioned in the statistics earlier, most of the accidents and fatalities that occur in this industry are preventable.



For the most part, accidents do not happen when linemen are faced with a difficult and complex assignment, but when they're faced with a job that is considered routine.

For example, consider your drive to work, school or church. Is that something you even think twice about anymore? For the most part, we don't, because it's routine and something we do daily.

As hard as it is to believe, this happens even when dealing with 14,400 volts.

The next time you visit your local Southern Pine office please ask about Zero by Choice and our progress. With the diligence of our employees and the support of our members, we'll send everyone home the same way they arrived and reach this million man-hours—and beyond!

OSHA begins requiring utilities to provide lineworker clothing to protect from arc flashes and "fall protection" devices like body harnesses and fall-arrest lanyards.

## Insulated hard hats

Linemen now wear hard hats insulated with a special polyethylene that protects against blows to the head.

## Harnesses

Linemen aren't climbing as much, so body harnesses and lanyards are valuable backup support.

## Clothing

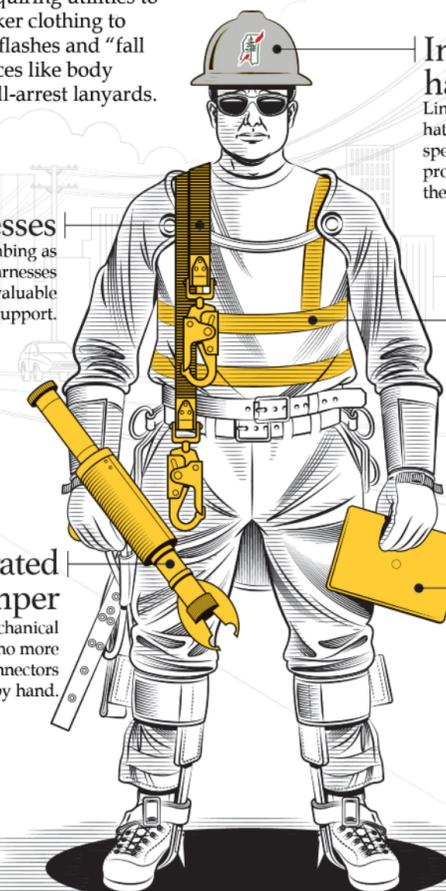
Arc-rated clothing is written into OSHA-required Personal Protective Equipment.

## Battery-operated crimper

Lightweight mechanical crimpers mean no more squeezing connectors by hand.

## Tablets

Mobile devices help lineworkers troubleshoot problems using SCADA and meter data instead of climbing a pole or going up in a bucket.



Before you pick up the shovel, pick up the phone.

Free Safety Guide!  
Download at  
[BeAwareEverywhere.com](http://BeAwareEverywhere.com)



Call 811 to locate underground power lines.

Electrical hazards aren't always obvious. So be smart. Be safe. And call before you dig.

## CONTACT US

Call or visit any of our offices.  
Business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

- Taylorsville – 110 Risher St.; (601) 785-6511
- Brandon – 3215 Louis Wilson Drive; (601) 824-7070
- Newton – 1400 S. Main St.; (601) 683-2200
- New Hebron – 2504 Ferguson Mill Road; (601) 694-2711
- Hattiesburg – 7848 U.S. 49 North; (601) 264-0185

## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA @MYSOUTHERNPINE

We use **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **LinkedIn** to post information on how to become more energy efficient, safety tips and to inform members about special events throughout the year. During weather-related events, these sites provide storm preparation details and outage information.

However, social media is not the most efficient means to report an outage, as it is not monitored 24-7.

## SIGN UP FOR MYPower TODAY

MyPower is an online tool that allows members to check energy use, view previous bills and set a monthly electricity-use budget. The site also provides an easy-to-use method for reporting an outage and allows you to email questions or comments to Southern Pine. To sign up for MyPower, visit [southernpine.coop](http://southernpine.coop) and click on the MyPower icon in the center of the home page.

