

## MPUA PUBLIC OUTREACH RESOURCES

### MARCH 2015

- ***“MARCH MADNESS” UTILITY TIPS***
- ***SPRING STORM PREPAREDNESS and SAFETY***

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#### “MARCH MADNESS” UTILITY TIPS

One of the most common questions asked this time of year is “how are your brackets doing”? Amid all the choices to make as you decide on the matchup between Fast Break University and Tall Guy Tech, we hope you’ll also think about some easy choices to save energy and water. Here’s an “Elite 8” of ideas to get you thinking.

#### FREE THROW LINE - Four “Free” (No Cost) tips

- **Leaving the room? Flip off the light switch.** It might be the easiest thing you do today. And your mom was right – money doesn’t grow on trees around here.
- **Reduce water heater temperature.** If your water heater is set hotter than 120 degrees Fahrenheit, set it back down to 120° F, so it takes less energy to heat your home’s water supply.
- **Clean the lint trap.** Your clothes dryer will breathe easier and do its job more efficiently.
- **Rock-a-bye your PC.** Most computers today come with a “sleep mode” or power management features. Many of these features aren’t already enabled when you purchase a computer. Learn how to set and use those “power down” settings for easy savings.

#### DOUBLE DRIBBLE - don’t be penalized by wasted water

The U.S. EPA designates the third week of March as “Fix-A-Leak Week” to remind Americans to check plumbing fixtures for leaks and conserve on home water use. Here’s a “Final Four” worth of simple water-saving tips. Score some extra points for resource conservation, along with saving a little money.

- **TOILET TROUBLES** – Toilets are often the home’s biggest source of water use, and a common cause of water waste, due to leaks and inefficiency. A leak from the tank into the bowl causing the tank to refill frequently can add a surprisingly large amount to the monthly water bill. The cause is often an old, faulty toilet flapper. Over time, this inexpensive rubber part decays, or minerals build up on it. It’s usually best to replace the whole rubber flapper—a relatively easy, inexpensive do-it-yourself project that pays for itself in no time.
- **FAUCET FIXES** – That annoying faucet leak may be costing you more than you realize. A single faucet tap dripping once every three seconds can waste more than 600 gallons of water a year. In most cases, a worn out washer is the culprit. New washers are cheap, and they can be replaced in minutes with a simple wrench and screwdriver. Also, make sure you have aerators on your faucets.
- **SHOWER POWER** – Taking shorter showers can save water, but for more consistent savings in the long run when you “head for the showers”, go low flow. You can buy a quality, high-efficiency lower-flow shower head for around \$10-\$20, and achieve water savings of anywhere from 25-60 percent over many older fixtures. Try a high-efficiency showerhead with a flow rate of less than 2.5 gpm (gallons per minute). Before 1992, some showerheads had flow rates of 5.5 gpm, so if you’re not sure of the flow rate, you might want to consider replacing older models.
- **WATERSENSE makes sense.** Next time you replace a toilet, or faucet, check out models with EPA’s WaterSense label for even more water savings. Products that earn the WaterSense label have been certified as at least 20 percent more efficient than similar products, without sacrificing performance. ([www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense))

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**SPRING STORM SAFETY AND PREPAREDNESS** – *[Much of the following information is adapted from material by: Missouri Department of and Health and Senior Services, Missouri Department of Public Safety, and American Red Cross]*

Severe weather happens often in Missouri during spring and summer months. Storms with lightning, high winds or tornadoes can strike suddenly and cause dangerous situations. The following tips are designed to help you be safe during severe weather anytime it impacts the **[UTILITY/CITY NAME]** area

#### **Familiarize yourself with these weather forecast terms to help identify storm hazards:**

- **Thunderstorm or tornado WATCHES** are issued to tell you when and where severe thunderstorms or tornadoes are likely to occur.
- **WARNINGS** are issued when severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. Warnings indicate imminent danger to those in the path of the storm.

#### **BE PREPARED BEFORE A STORM**

MAKE A PLAN for you and your family, for when a thunderstorm or tornado strikes – whether the storm strikes when you are at home, at work, or at relatives' or friends' homes. Talk about how you will reach each other.

#### **Prepare An Emergency Kit.**

The items listed below should be part of your basic emergency kit and kept in a container that can be easily carried.

- Water – store one gallon per person, per day, enough for a three day supply.
- Food – non-perishable, easy-to-prepare canned or dried foods. If there's an infant in the house, include formula and baby food.
- Can opener
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
- Extra batteries for radio and flashlight.
- First aid kit
- Medications (7-day supply) and medical items
- Multi-purpose tool
- Sanitation & personal hygiene items
- Copies of critical personal documents
- Cell phone with chargers
- Family & emergency contact information
- Extra cash

Missouri's **READY IN 3** program provides free family safety guides to help prepare your family and household for an area emergency. The guides are available in several languages. Visit [health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3/](http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3/) to obtain a family safety guide online, and for a wide variety of other emergency preparedness information.

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### WHEN A STORM IS LIKELY

- Listen to radio, television, or NOAA *Weather Radio* for weather reports and emergency information.
- Postpone outdoor activities.
- Remember "***If thunder roars, go indoors***". No place outside is safe when lightning is in the area. Get inside a home, building, or hard top automobile (not a convertible). Although you may be injured if lightning strikes your car, you are much safer inside a vehicle than outside.
- Power surges from lightning can cause serious damage. Unplug appliances and other electrical items such as computers and turn off air conditioners.
- Secure outdoor objects that could blow away or cause damage.
- Close windows and secure outside doors. If shutters are not available, close window blinds, shades, or curtains.
- **Long-term preparation:** Remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage during a severe thunderstorm.

### DURING A STORM

#### **After getting inside a home or building:**

- Stay away from windows and doors, and stay off porches.
- Avoid showering or bathing and contact with plumbing during a thunderstorm. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity. Do not wash your hands, wash dishes or do laundry.
- Avoid contact with electrical equipment or cords during a thunderstorm. Cordless and cellular telephones are safe to use. Use a corded telephone only for emergencies.
- Because concrete conducts electricity, do not lie on concrete floors and do not lean against concrete walls.
- Stay indoors until 30 minutes after you hear the last clap of thunder.

#### **If you find yourself outside when a thunderstorm hits, avoid the following:**

- Remember, rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires provide NO protection from lightning. However, the steel frame of a hard-topped vehicle provides increased protection if you are not touching metal.
- Natural lightning rods such as a tall, isolated tree in an open area.
- Hilltops, open fields, the beach, or a boat on the water.
- Isolated sheds or other small structures in open areas.
- Anything metal—tractors, farm equipment, motorcycles, golf carts, golf clubs, and bicycles.

### AFTER THE STORM

#### **BE SAFE AROUND POWER LINES**

- If you see a downed power line, **don't touch it!** Call 911 **[and/or OTHER UTILITY CONTACT INFO or NUMBER]** immediately.
- Be extra cautious when you go outside to inspect for damage after a storm. Downed or hanging electrical wires can be hidden by trees or debris, and could be live.

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- Stay away from downed or sagging power lines, and do not touch ANYTHING on or near a power line. Never try to touch or move downed lines. Keep children and pets away from areas where lines may have fallen.
- Do not touch anything power lines are touching, such as tree branches or fences. Always assume a downed line is a "live line."
- If a power line falls across a car that you're in, stay in the car. If you MUST get out of the car due to a fire or other immediate life-threatening situation, do your best to jump clear of the car and land on both feet. Be sure that no part of your body is touching the car when your feet touch the ground.

During a recovery period after a severe storm, it is important to monitor local radio, television or other media sources for information about where to get emergency housing, food, first aid, clothing, and financial assistance. Direct assistance to individuals and families may come from organizations, including: **[LIST APPROPRIATE LOCAL AGENCIES, such as Red Cross, local Community Action Agencies, etc.]**