

SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC Cooperative



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PLAY IT SAFE ONLINE

By **TYE WILLIAMS**

In today's world, most of us don't leave the front door unlocked. We protect our homes, loved ones and valuables from intruders with locks, alarms and other security measures. Cybersecurity is no different. It's the practice of protecting other valuables such as your identity, banking and health records, and other sensitive information from digital attacks and theft.



In addition to shipping cattle, pumpkin-spice lattes, crisper air and Halloween festivities, October is the time of year we recognize Cybersecurity Awareness Month. While taking necessary steps to protect our personal information is a year-round practice, at Southeast Electric Cooperative, we use this time to share helpful cybersecurity reminders with our members.

Given our increased reliance on Internet-connected devices and gadgets, this month, I'd like to share a few cybersecurity tips and let you know how Southeast Electric is working to boost our own cybersecurity efforts.

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA), an agency of the United States Depart-

ment of Homeland Security that is responsible for strengthening cybersecurity and infrastructure protection, these are the four best ways to keep you and your family safe online:

Implement multi-factor authentication (also known as two-step verification) on your accounts. The additional layer of protection makes it much harder for criminals to access your information. Even if a hacker obtains your password, they may be unable to access your accounts if multi-step verification is enabled.

Update your software. This is one of the easiest ways to protect your personal data. When downloading a software update, make sure it's coming straight from the company that created it. Beware of fake pop-ups that request urgent downloads. Better yet, turn on automatic updates.

Think before you click. Most successful cyber attacks start with a phishing email. Don't take the bait when cyber criminals go phishing. Avoid emails (or texts) that look too good to be true, oddly urgent, poorly crafted or include unusual requests.

Create strong passwords, using long, unique and complex words or phrases. Consider using a password manager to save time, work across all devices, protect your identity and notify you of potential phishing

websites.

For the young people

Just as you would talk with your children about safety in the physical world, discuss ways to stay safe online. Help them understand the public nature of the Internet. Young people need to know early on that what is shared online stays online and is difficult (if not impossible) to take back. Just as you would guard your money or valuables, children need to learn to guard their personal information, especially on social networks. As a parent or guardian, help your children learn about and use the privacy and security settings on social networks and gaming sites.

While you are doing your part at home, we're doing our share on the cyber front to protect the cooperative. Part of offering excellent service is keeping that service secure and reliable. For Southeast Electric, reliability means repairing wear-and-tear, upgrading our equipment to withstand storms and severe weather, and using technology and best practices to keep our system secure from cybersecurity issues.

We also work together with co-ops across the country to develop new

Continued next page

OCTOBER 5

National Do Something Nice Day

HAVE you ever paid for a stranger's meal at a restaurant or been in a drive-through line and paid for the person behind you? It is such a fun thing to do. October 5th is National Do Something Nice Day. Try one of the ideas listed below:

- Give an unexpected compliment.
- Help someone carry their grocery bags.
- Offer to return a stranger's grocery cart to the front of the store.
- Donate flowers to a nursing home.
- Pay for a meal of the people at the next table. (leave before they realize you've done it)
- Give an extra tip with a word of encouragement
- Buy lemonade at a child's lemonade stand.
- Smile at someone who looks sad.
- Be an organ donor.
- Give Blood. RM

ONLINE

Continued from previous page

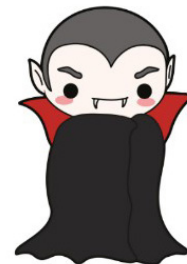
technologies and infrastructure, train and learn from each other and keep the grid's network secure. For example, we participate in cybersecurity tabletop exercises where co-ops around Montana come together to simulate realistic cyber issues and practice responding to the latest types of issues we might have to manage.

While we can't stop a storm or predict every disruption, as a co-op, we do everything we can to keep the lights on and our members protected. Because if we all do our part, our interconnected world will be safer and more secure for everyone. RM



Beware of dreaded energy vampires

VAMPIRE energy, also called phantom energy or standby power, is the electricity that some devices use when they are turned off but still plugged into a power outlet. The most common culprits are electronics and other “smart” devices that have a built-in clock or digital display, but other appliances can be energy vampires too. These use the most vampire energy in your home:



• **Televisions.** TVs can be some of the most energy-sucking devices in your home, especially modern “smart” TVs with all the bells and whistles, including satellite TV, Wi-Fi connectivity, DVR capabilities and more.

• **Computers.** Computers don't use nearly as much energy as TVs, especially if they are smaller devices such as laptops and tablets, but their chargers can be major energy vampires. Unplug the charger from the outlet to avoid using phantom power.

• **Refrigerators.** Refrigerators are major energy vampires, but there is not much you can do about that except to buy one that's more energy efficient.

• **Thermostats.** Your thermostat, air conditioner and hot-water heater use a lot of energy, but you can't turn them off. The best thing for you to do is to choose a “smart thermostat” and program it so it doesn't use more power than necessary.

• **Kitchen appliances.** Microwaves, coffee makers and other small appliances don't use a lot of power individually, but together it can add up. Choose items without a clock or digital display to reduce their power consumption.

Other appliances or devices that are vampires of energy, and that you may consider unplugging when you are not using them, would be: toasters, can openers, hair curlers/dryers, laser printers, space heaters, lamps, cell-phone chargers and video game systems — just to name a few.

Although it would be great if we could eliminate energy vampires entirely, the reality is a little more complicated. Unplugging every single appliance every time you leave the room is impractical, and some devices, such as your refrigerator, can't be unplugged at all. Still, you can reduce the amount of electricity your appliances use by choosing the most energy-efficient devices and following practical energy conservation tips. Remember that Southeast Electric offers rebates for purchases on energy-efficient refrigerators, freezers, washers, dryers and dishwashers. Go to www.seecoop.com/appliance-rebate for more information. RM