

# How To Be Safe At Home: Cool Weather Guide To Electrical and Natural Gas Safety

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ST. LOUIS - As summer turns to fall, and we pull out space heaters, clean gutters and hang holiday lights, it is important to recognize potential safety hazards inside and outside our homes. Home electrical fires account for an estimated 51,000 fires each year

in the U.S. In recognition of Fire Prevention Week, Ameren Missouri encourages customers to identify any potentially hazardous electrical or natural gas safety issues at home.

"As temperatures start to cool, it's a great time to start home projects, which can introduce some new safety hazards for customers," said **Tim Frankenberg**, fire safety engineer for Ameren Missouri. "Spending a few minutes to understand potential electrical, natural gas or general safety issues and being prepared can help customers keep their home and family safe."

## **Electrical Fire Safety Tips**

- Keep space heaters away from furniture, drapes, electronics and outside high-traffic areas and on a level, hard, non-combustible floor surface – *not* on carpets, furniture or countertops.
- Only plug one heat-producing appliance, such as a coffee maker, toaster or space heater, into an outlet at a time.
- Plug major appliances (refrigerators, dryers, washers, stoves, air conditioners, heaters and microwaves) directly into a wall outlet. Extension cords and power strips should not be used with these appliances.
- Use extension cords only for temporary purposes. If using an extension cord outdoors, make sure it is approved for outdoor use.
- Do not run extension cords under rugs or carpets.
- Hire a qualified electrician to do electrical work at your home.

## **Outdoor & General Safety Tips**

- Before starting your outdoor project, look up and around you. Simply notice the location of power lines and other utilities.
- Contact a professional contractor if trees need to be trimmed near power lines, and never use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near electric lines.
- Examine the condition of holiday lights before putting up. If a mouse chewed through a wire, you may hurt yourself or others when you install them. If you're using extension cords, make sure you buy outdoor extension cords; they will be clearly marked as "outdoor-safe" on the label.
- Change your smoke detector batteries when you change your clocks for daylight saving on Nov. 6. Look at the date on the back and change the detector if it is over 10 years old.
- Have a plan. Discuss your fire escape routes with the whole family. If you have young children, practice different ways to get out of the house and establish a meeting point outside.

## Natural Gas Safety Tips

- Use your senses to detect a gas leak. Natural gas is naturally colorless and odorless. Leaks *sound* like a high-pitched whistle, hissing or roaring near a gas line or appliance, they *smell* like rotten eggs, and outside, they *look* like an unusual area of dead vegetation or bubbling mud.
- Leave your home immediately if you suspect a natural gas leak, and call Ameren Missouri at 800.552.7583 to report it or dial 911. Do not re-enter the property for any reason until personnel instructs you that it is safe to enter.

At Ameren Missouri, we place a high value on working and living safely. Not only because it's vital to how we deliver reliable energy to customers, but it's part of our company culture. To learn more, visit [AmerenMissouri.com/Safety](https://www.amerenmissouri.com/Safety).

## About Ameren Missouri

Ameren Missouri has been providing electric and gas service for more than 100 years, and the company's electric rates are among the lowest in the nation. Ameren Missouri's mission is to power the quality of life for its 1.2 million electric and 135,000 natural gas customers in central and eastern Missouri. The company's service area covers 64 counties and more than 500 communities, including the greater St. Louis area. For more information, visit [Ameren.com/Missouri](https://www.ameren.com/Missouri) or follow us on Twitter at [@AmerenMissouri](https://twitter.com/AmerenMissouri) or [Facebook.com/AmerenMissouri](https://www.facebook.com/AmerenMissouri).