

Avoid Heartbreaking Electrical Accidents BY MOLLY HALL



Molly Hall

THE MACKENZIE FAMILY didn't dream their 12-year-old daughter would die from an electrical shock when she went swimming with friends. Their tragedy taught them the importance of ground fault circuit (GFCI) protection around pools and other water sources.

The Studer boys didn't expect an electrical flash when they opened an unlocked electrical box in their new back yard. They were lucky the burns left no permanent scars. They and their parents want everyone to understand about pad-mounted equipment.

Steve Wald and his kids felt sure they would make it home on their bikes before the storm hit. Instead, the wind brought a live power line to the ground in front of them. They turned back, sought shelter at the closest home, and learned that when thunder roars, you must go indoors.

We don't want anyone to learn about electrical safety the hard way, through a personal experience that ends with life-changing injuries or death.

Working for an electric utility got me thinking about electrical safety several years ago. Before then—like most people—I turned on lights, plugged things in, and never thought about electricity unless the power went out. That changed when I learned about the multitude of heartbreaking, life-changing incidents—most avoidable.

I'm passionate about sharing electrical safety information and preventing tragedies, and proud to be part of Safe Electricity, the national educational program that works to prevent electrical tragedies and deaths. I am grateful for the hundreds of utilities that partner with us in that mission.

We know that when we arm people with knowledge, they will make the right move to stay safe.

So make sure you understand the dangers of

swimming in a marina or near docks with electrical service. Check the location of power lines before fishing, and cast away from them.

Help children to recognize electrical equipment and stay away. Teach them to never climb trees that are close to power lines.

Look up when working with tall tools. Carry ladders horizontally and check for overhead power lines before placing upright.

Any downed line is potentially energized and deadly. Know what to do in an auto accident that involves downed power lines.

Learn what you need to keep yourself and loved ones safe by visiting SafeElectricity.org. Packed with videos, games, articles and more, SafeElectricity.org is a virtual library for children and adults, farmers, contractors, business people, homeowners, teachers—just about anyone who has questions or needs to know about electrical safety. Learning and understanding electrical safety steps and situations is a valuable investment of time for all of us.

Electricity is an important asset to our modern life but we must respect that power or the results can be tragic. More than a thousand people die and thousands more injured in electrical incidents and fires each year. We can change that reality.

As warmer weather sprouts thoughts of happy outdoor scenes—children running and playing, people enjoying pools and lakes, folks digging into gardening and other projects—most are not thinking about potential safety hazards that could affect the summer fun. We want you to keep them in mind to ensure a safe summer making great memories.

Have a great, safe summer! **KCL**

MOLLY HALL is Executive Director, Energy Education Council at Safe Electricity.



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