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Parents advised to discuss substation safety with children

Little Rock, Ark. — Feb. 1, 2005 — As reality television shows continue to grow in popularity it is important to remember that although they are “real,” the outcome of some of the stunts could have much different results.

Such is the case with a stunt performed on the NBC television show, Fear Factor on Monday night, which placed contestants within the proximity of an electric substation where they received minor shocks. This sort of behavior — in real life — is extremely dangerous, even fatal.

“Let me assure you, substations, which handle power for thousands of households, are not designed for the public to play with,” said Larry Harp, manager of safety and loss control for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas. “Substations are fenced and locked for a reason. Safety. Only trained, well-equipped professionals should ever enter a substation.”

Harp said, “Children can be easily influenced by scenes depicted on television. We urge all parents to remind their children to stay away from electric substations and also discuss electric power line safety with their children.

According to Harp, the cooperatives are concerned about the message the television show’s stunt could send to children.

"We work very hard throughout the year to teach children to stay away from substations and power lines, and to be aware of the potential for danger.

Included in the Electric Cooperative of Arkansas’ efforts are special presentations to school children and the public and a safety curriculum in schools.

"All of our efforts are useless if children think they can not be hurt with electricity, especially the amount of power handled at a substation," Harp said. "We encourage parents to be aware of what their children are watching and to take the opportunity to reinforce safe habits through family discussions."

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas comprise 17 electric distribution cooperatives; Arkansas Electric Cooperatives Inc. (AECI), a Little Rock-based cooperative that provides various services to the distribution cooperatives; and Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corp. (AECC), a generation and transmission cooperative. The distribution cooperatives provide electricity to approximately 440,000 members, or customers, in Arkansas and surrounding states.

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