

Besides the Leaves, Look for "Safety" This Fall

A photograph of several deer with large antlers standing in a forest with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of orange, yellow, and red. The scene is captured in a slightly hazy, artistic style.

This time of year we often find ourselves looking at the fall colors as we traverse Minnesota. It's a beautiful time of year and I often say that is why we live here.

Yet, it is also the season of hunting and many people going to the hunting cabins, etc. So, here are four things to consider as we leave the summer behind and head into the woods. Look for safety this fall season!

1. Keep utility poles free of any objects. Yes, it does look like a great place to hang that "no trespassing" sign or to place the flying Halloween witch, but we simply can't. Our lineworkers need to be able to climb the pole for repairs and it is too dangerous when there are objects on it.
2. Know how to operate a portable generator safely. These devices are simply not to give a start and then just let it run. You need to know key steps so you don't end up hurting someone or yourself through backfeed or carbon monoxide poisoning.
 - Never operate a generator inside a home or a partially enclosed space, such as a garage.
 - Never connect generators directly to household wiring without first installing a transfer switch.
 - Make sure generator is properly grounded and used with a GFCI.
 - Use extension cords that are 3-pronged and rated for intended load.
 - Install battery-powered CO alarms in the rooms.
 - Keep generators at least 20 feet away from doors, windows or vents to prevent CO from entering home.
 - Allow hot engines to cool for at least 2 minutes before removing gas cap and refueling.
3. Know how to operate your "staying warm" equipment. When using an electrical heater, they can be dangerous if not operated properly.
 - Keep combustible material such as beds, sofas, curtains, papers, and clothes at least 3 feet from the front, sides, and rear of the heater.
 - During use, check frequently to determine if the heater plug or cord, wall outlet, or faceplate is HOT! If the plug, outlet, or faceplate is hot, discontinue use of the heater, and have a qualified electrician check and/or replace the plug or faulty wall outlet(s). If the cord is hot, disconnect the heater, and have it inspected/repared by an authorized repair person.
 - Never power the heater with an extension cord or power strip.
 - Never run the heater's cord under rugs or carpeting. This can damage the cord, causing it and nearby objects to burn.
 - To prevent electrical shocks and electrocutions, always keep electric heaters away from water, and NEVER touch an electric heater if you are wet.
4. You are not alone out there. Our crews work day and night to keep the power on and the system operational. When shooting your gun, make sure you have clear line of sight. You do not want to hit a truck, a substation or, worse yet, another human being.