

Protect your sensitive electronic equipment!

Household electronic equipment, entertainment systems, and many modern electric appliances contain sensitive circuitry and microprocessors. These are easily affected by power quality disturbances, such as power surges, sags, or interruptions.

Your power quality may be affected by conditions inside your home, by external factors such as the weather, or by situations affecting HECO's power lines and equipment. What can you do to protect your electronic equipment?

- **Unplug your sensitive electronic equipment during rainstorms, thunderstorms, and if the power goes out.** This will help prevent damage from potential



disturbances during the storm and when power is restored.

- **Properly ground your cable TV, telephone, and utility service lines.** Power surges can enter your home through these lines. If you are unsure if they are grounded properly, consult a qualified electrician.

- **Avoid plugging sensitive equipment into circuits powering major appliances.** This isolates the equipment from fluctuations caused when a major appliance, such as a room air conditioner or refrigerator, cycles on and off.
- **Use a quality surge suppressor.** If your equipment does not have built-in surge protection, purchase a high-quality plug-in surge suppressor to protect it. Low-cost multi-strip outlets (power strips) containing surge suppressors may provide inadequate protection, so review product specifications. Better quality surge protectors usually carry warranties that cover damage to connected equipment. To make sure the product meets stringent safety standards, purchase a product that bears the UL mark.

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Use space heaters safely

Winter is here, and even in our islands we have chilly winds and cooler temperatures. Consequently, you might be inclined to use a portable space heater to keep yourself warm. Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind.

- When purchasing a heater, check to make sure it bears the mark of a certified testing laboratory, such as UL, ETL, or CSA, which indicates samples of the product have met strict safety standards.
- Inspect the heater's cord to check for frayed wire or damaged insulation. Do not use a space heater with a damaged cord.
- Avoid plugging a space heater into an extension cord, but if one is necessary, use a heavy-duty cord that is appropriate for the wattage of the heater.
- Use an outlet adapter if you do not have a 3-hole outlet for the heater's 3-prong plug. Make sure the adapter's ground wire or tab is attached to the

outlet's ground. Never remove the grounding prong (third prong) on the heater's plug.

- Place the space heater at least 3 feet away from flammable materials.
- Do not leave the heater operating while it is unattended or while you are sleeping and unplug it when you leave for the day.
- Keep portable electric heaters away from water and never touch an electric heater if you are wet. Unless the heater is designed for use in bathrooms or outdoors, do not use it in damp or wet areas.
- Never run the heater's cord under a rug or carpeting.
- Warn children to never insert their fingers or objects through the heater's protective guard. They could be burned or receive an electric shock.

For more information, go to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website: www.cpsc.gov.



Earned Income Tax Credit

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a federal income tax credit for low-income workers. The EITC reduces the amount of tax an individual owes, and when the credit exceeds the amount of taxes owed, it may be returned in the form of a refund.

To qualify, taxpayers must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they do not earn enough money to be obligated to file a tax return.

This tax credit has no effect on certain welfare benefits.

EITC filers may receive free income tax assistance services, including fast, safe, and accurate electronic filing. For information on service sites near you call Aloha United Way's help line, from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., weekdays excluding holidays, toll-free at: **211** or **1 877 275-6569**. EITC information is also available online at: www.irs.gov/eitc

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- **Consider installing a panel-mounted surge suppressor or lightning arrester at your main circuit breaker panel.** Additionally, whole house surge protection can be installed at your main electric panel or subpanel by a qualified electrician. These devices should be used together with quality surge protectors, not as a substitute for them.
- **Consider installing an uninterruptible power supply (UPS).** A UPS provides battery backup when the power fails and it protects equipment from voltage surges and spikes. A high-quality UPS can also regulate incoming voltage.

Wash and dry wisely

Did you know that for hot-water laundry loads the majority of the energy used to wash the clothes is used to heat the water?

And were you aware that a clothes dryer is one of the most expensive appliances in your home to operate?

A few simple steps for using your clothes washer and dryer wisely can help you reduce your monthly energy costs.

Washing tips:

- ✓ Wash your clothes in cold water using cold-water detergents unless your clothes have oily stains.

- ✓ Avoid using the sanitary cycle on your washer unless absolutely necessary. This super-hot cycle, available on some models, significantly increases energy use.

- ✓ Wash full loads to avoid wasting water. If you are washing smaller loads, adjust the water level setting accordingly.

- ✓ Make sure the washer wrings the water out of your clothes well to decrease their drying time. If possible, select the high spin speed or the extended spin option.

Drying tips:

- ✓ Dry towels and heavier clothes in a separate load from light-weight clothes.

- ✓ Don't over-dry your clothes. If your dryer has a moisture sensor, use it.

- ✓ Use the cool-down cycle to allow clothes to finish drying with the residual heat in the dryer.

- ✓ Clean the lint filter in the dryer after every load to improve air circulation. If you use fabric softener sheets, scrub the lint filter monthly to remove the film deposited by the sheets.

- ✓ Inspect your dryer vent to ensure it is not blocked. The venting system and interior of the dryer should be cleaned periodically by qualified service personnel.

- ✓ Air-dry clothes on clothes lines or drying racks whenever possible.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Black Bean Turkey Chili

- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 tablespoon regular chili powder
- 1/2 tablespoon chipotle chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
- 2 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon chili sauce (such as sriracha sauce)

- 2 cans (14 1/2) ounces OR 1 can (28 ounces) whole tomatoes, undrained and chopped
- 1/2 cup beer (optional)
- 1 can (15 1/2 ounces) black beans, undrained
- Shredded cheddar or Monterey jack cheese, for garnish

Cook turkey, onions, and garlic with olive oil in a 3-quart saucepan until turkey is cooked through. Stir in chili powders, salt, cumin, oregano, cocoa powder, chili sauce, tomatoes, beer, and black beans; bring to a boil, then reduce heat. Simmer

chili, uncovered, for about 30 to 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve over rice, garnish with cheese, and serve with corn chips on the side. Recipe makes 6 servings.

