

A Mirror of the Community

Most customers prefer to do business with the owner. After all, the owner tends to have an emotional and financial investment in the long-term success of the enterprise.

As a policyholder at Central Illinois Mutual Insurance Company, you know our owners better than anyone else. Just look in the mirror. As the policyholders at Central Illinois Mutual Insurance Company, you are an owner. To meet other owners, go to a high school ballgame, or church, or any community activity. You'll find our policyholder/owners everywhere you look.

There are many companies that can write a property insurance policy, yet know almost nothing about you or this area. We continue to believe that property protection is an important obligation and a reflection of our values; values that echo the commitment of the generations who founded and built this community. We look forward to helping to grow and shape the future of this special place.

That's why we continue to believe that our policyholders are the people that we know best, but are also the best people we know.



CIMply Safety

Why are you receiving this newsletter?

As a member of your mutual insurance company, you have a vested interest in safety and loss prevention. Accidents and losses can result in injuries and death as well as property damage.

Even though insurance can help you repair or replace buildings and equipment, damage to property can disrupt lives. For homeowners, this often means loss of valuable possessions. For farmers, losses disrupt farm operations, which can mean lost opportunities and lost income.

On a broader scale, loss prevention helps keep premiums under control. When a mutual pays for losses that could be prevented, all members pay the price. Initially, that price is paid through higher insurance premiums. Over the long-term, excessive claim payments may eventually threaten the very success of the mutual. If mutuals ceased to exist, competition in the marketplace would be reduced. Less competition usually means higher prices.

While some losses are not preventable, it is in everyone's interests to take reasonable steps to avoid losses. Most losses that are not weather-related can be prevented. Proper upkeep and maintenance coupled with an active safety program are keys to loss prevention.

What can you do?

Safety and loss prevention begin with you. While your insurance company and other resources can provide you with information and tools, only you can prevent controllable losses. When you adopt a commitment to a safer environment, others around you will do the same.

We have partnered with providers of safety products and services to form the Farm and Home Safety Network. We encourage you to contact these providers for more information about how they can help you create a safer living environment.

Visit us at www.CIMICO.net to find more information about the Farm and Home Safety Network. You will also find valuable Safety and Loss Prevention Tips.

Bright Idea Efficient Lighting

How much do you pay to light your house? The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that lighting uses 17% of all residential electrical power. Our old friend, the incandescent bulb invented by Edison, is very inefficient when judged against new options.

Newer, more efficient lighting choices include LED's (light-emitting diodes) and CFL's (compact fluorescent light). Both have designs that fit screw-based light sockets. The EIA prepared a table that compares cost and energy usage at light levels equal to a single traditional 60 watt bulb.

Each of the high efficiency bulbs is more expensive than incandescents, particularly the LED's. Yet, high efficiency options last 10 to 25 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs. While CFL's can be damaged fairly easily, the LED's tend to be highly durable. Also, CFL's contain a small amount of mercury and need to be recycled properly.

There really are some bright, efficient, and cost saving new ideas for illuminating your home.



Traditional Incandescent versus Energy-Efficient Lightbulbs

	60 Watt Traditional Incandescent	43 Watt Energy Saving Incandescent	15 Watt CFL	12 Watt LED
Energy Saved	-	-25%	-75%	-75 to 80%
Annual Energy Cost*	\$4.80	\$3.50	\$1.20	\$1.00
Bulb Life	1000 hours	1000 to 3000 hours	10,000 hours	25,000 hours

*Based on 2 hrs/day of usage, an electricity rate of 11 cents per kilowatt-hour.

Source: <http://energy.gov/energysaver/articles/lighting-choices-save-you-money>

Electric Tidal Waves

The Electric Tidal Waves sounds like a psychedelic rock group from the 60's. Actually, it describes an electrical power spike (or power surge) that can attack your electrical equipment many times daily. There can be many causes for surges outside the house, and spikes can even be created in the house by appliances turning on and off. Prior to microchips, surges were not a big problem.



Microchips changed everything. These tiny chips are the "brains" of everything from hair dryers to refrigerators. These powerful but fragile devices can have millions of circuits on a chip no bigger than the surface of a cornflake. An electrical spike can fry these tiny circuits with a single burst, or by cumulative surges over time.

It is essential to protect these powerful, yet delicate circuits. Surge protectors (sometimes called voltage clamps) work by blocking power spikes before they reach electrical equipment. Some provide whole house protection with installation at the main panel, while others are plugged into wall outlets around the house.

Look for surge protectors that respond quickly (preferably 1 nanosecond or less) with large voltage handling capacities. Some manufacturers offer replacement protection against damage should the product fail. Also, an indicator light is a necessary feature to assure that the surge protector is continuing to perform.

Your House In Need Preparing for Spring Storms

Your house never rests. After a winter of wind and cold, your house might need help in getting ready to protect and shelter you from upcoming spring and summer storms. Conduct a spring check-up to identify any mechanical and structural problems, because finding and solving problems early saves money and avoids future problems. Some areas to check:



- **Roof damage to shingles and flashing** Some roof damage may not be observable from the ground. Unless you are sure-footed and experienced, don't get up on the roof.
- **Siding/windows** Inspect house siding for gaps or damage that developed over the winter. Inspect seals and caulking around windows. This is often the starting point for air leaks.
- **Gutters/drainage** Clean gutters and be sure water drainage is away from the house foundation. Clogged gutters and poor drainage directs water down the side of the house foundation. The result? Wet basements and damage to basement walls.



A reputable local contractor can be a great asset for inspection and needed repair. Your house needs your help to provide for your comfort, safety, and protection.

Beware of Cons who are Pros

While each spring brings a special beauty, it also brings the arrival of "home repair professionals" who are skilled at scamming homeowners. This is more often a problem when storms cause widespread damage. But these "pros" can be running their cons most anywhere.

Using deception, high-pressure sales tactics, and time-limited offers, they may offer "free inspections" where damage is invariably found. These scammers then seek authorization from homeowners to negotiate with the insurance company. They may offer "free work" as incentive to bypass deductibles, though this usually represents insurance fraud.

Their goal is to obtain as much cash as quickly as possible. Repair work is often shoddy and incomplete, and they quickly move on (cash in hand), leaving homeowners without recourse or warranty for a job done poorly. If these contractors leave construction material suppliers without timely payment, suppliers can often legally place a lien on the home.

Homeowners beware! Don't let contractors pressure you

into a quick decision. A reputable, local contractor wants a satisfied customer. When seeking repairs, get multiple estimates, and seek local references for work completed by the contractor. Ask for and verify construction licenses and certifications of the insurance. This should include certificates of liability/workers compensation.

