PLUG INTO SAFETY

KEEP METALLIC BALLOONS **INSIDE**

You may be planning a celebration and looking to use fun decorations to help get everyone in the spirit. Keep safety in mind when using balloons outdoors.

Metal-coated balloons, or Mylars, can cause electric infrastructure problems and pose a public safety risk. They are linked to thousands of power outages each year. But there are ways to reduce the risk and safely use these balloons.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

- A gust of wind can grab the balloon — filled with helium or not — break it loose from the string, and blow it into overhead power lines.
- The metallic coating can conduct electricity and cause a short circuit or power surge when in contact with the lines.
- This can lead to large-scale power outages, melting of electrical wires, and fires. Any of these can lead to possible injuries and property damage.
- Helium-filled balloons that float away can drift for days and miles and come down anywhere. They are a risk to power lines and can also be dangerous to animals.

REDUCE THE RISK

- Keep them away from power lines.
- Tie helium-filled balloons to a weight that's heavy enough to prevent them from floating away.
- Keep the weight attached until the balloons are deflated.

WHAT TO DO

- If you see a Mylar balloon in contact with a power line or in an electric substation, never attempt to retrieve it yourself.
- Keep yourself and all other items and people at least 20 feet away.
- Call the electric utility or 911.
- Stay far away from a downed or low-hanging power line. Always assume downed or low-hanging lines are electrified and dangerous.
- Call 911 immediately if you see a downed line.