COMMUNITY & SAFETY

Bright Kids, Safe Choices: PMLD's School Safety Program

Every year, Princeton Municipal Light Department teams up with safety educator Ray Gouley of the R.F. Gouley Company to teach Thomas Prince School students how to stay safe around electricity.

Princeton Municipal Light Department · Princeton, MA

Electricity powers nearly everything in our lives. That s exactly why we think **every child in Princeton should know how to respect it**, and what to do when something goes wrong.

An annual tradition at Thomas Prince School

Our mission at PMLD has always been to provide a safe, reliable, and economical source of power to the people of Princeton. "Safe" doesn't stop at the meter. It extends into the community, and some of our most important customers are the youngest ones.

That's why PMLD sponsors an annual electrical safety program for 4th and 5th graders at Thomas Prince School. The program is delivered by Ray Gouley of the R.F. Gouley Company, a safety professional who has spent years bringing electrical safety education to children and community groups in municipal utility towns across Massachusetts.

Each May, PMLD's lineworkers continue this annual tradition by bringing one of the department's bucket trucks to Thomas Prince School and joining Ray for the program. Students get an up-close look at the equipment our crews use every day and a better understanding of the work it takes to keep Princeton's power on. Our lineworkers help Ray share real-life examples, showing objects and materials that have come into contact with power lines and equipment, so students can see the dangers of electricity for themselves.

These hands-on demonstrations make the lessons both memorable and meaningful. Just as importantly, students get to meet the people who work every day to keep the lights on in their town, strengthening the connection between PMLD and the youngest members of our community.

Lessons that stick

Ray's presentations are anything but a lecture. He uses videos, posters, and props, including real objects damaged in electrical accidents, like a bike tire that melted after rolling over a live wire or a hair dryer that caught fire after contact with water. Seeing the real thing makes the danger concrete in a way a worksheet never could.

Students walk step by step through what an electrical accident looks like and how to respond. Ray quizzes them along the way and rewards students who remember the key lessons, so the information sticks long after the assembly ends.

Stop. Think. Stay Away.

The simple action code at the heart of the program

What students learn

Look up first Check for overhead power lines before flying a kite, climbing a tree, or launching a drone.	**Keep your distance** Stay at least three utility poles away from a downed wire or a damaged pole, and call 911.
Water and power don't mix Keep electronics away from tubs and sinks, and never use water on an electrical fire.	**Respect the storm** Head indoors during lightning, and wait about 30 minutes after a storm before bathing or showering.
Keep toys clear Balloons, drones, and water blasters should stay far away from power lines.	**Stay put in a vehicle** If a car or bus hits a pole, stay inside until the utility confirms the power is off.

Why it matters: a real-life example

These lessons are more than classroom theory. In 2019, a school bus carrying students from Littleville Elementary School in Russell, Massachusetts, crashed into an electrical pole. The students had attended Ray's safety program, and they knew exactly what to do: they stayed inside the bus until the electric company arrived and shut off the power, which helped keep them from further harm.

> *A few minutes of learning in a school gym can make all the difference in a real emergency.*

Kids carry the lesson home

One of the best things about a school program is that it doesn't stay at school. Students go home and share what they learned with parents and siblings, often catching the frayed cord or the overloaded power strip that grown-ups have stopped noticing. When a 10-year-old reminds the family to look up before raising a ladder, the whole household gets safer.

Talk about it at home

- Ask your child to teach you Stop, Think, Stay Away.
- Walk your yard together and point out where the overhead lines run.
- Check cords and outlets for fraying, heat, or overloading.
- Keep hair dryers, phones, and chargers away from water.
- Make sure everyone knows to call 911 and PMLD if they see a downed line.

See a downed or damaged power line? Assume it is live. Stay far away, warn others, and call 911 and PMLD at **(978) 464-2815**. Never try to move a wire yourself.

Our thanks

PMLD is grateful to the teachers, staff, and administration at Thomas Prince School for making time in the school year for this program, and to Ray Gouley for his energy and dedication in teaching kids to stay safe. As Princeton's community-owned utility, we believe keeping our town safe is part of the job, and it starts with the next generation.