

Children Tour Plant to Learn About Source of Electricity

By Eric Fish

If they thought their backpacks were heavy, maybe they should try carrying around an Edison Sault Electric Company lineman's toolbox.

As part of their lessons on conservation, grades kindergarten through third at the Mackinac Island Public School took a field trip to the electric company Wednesday, May 30, to learn about where electricity comes from, how it's fixed, and what dangers it can cause.

The field trip to the Island facility was the final venture of the school year for the children and capped weeks of learning about nature and things that make a community work, like water treatment and electricity.

The tour was led by Mackinac Island's year-around Linemen Foreman Dan Wightman and Lineman Mark Chambers. Along the tour, they warned the children about the hazards of electrical wires, what to do if they see a downed wire, and demonstrated how they repair the wires.

"Electricity is extremely dangerous," Mr. Wightman said. "It's something that we really have to be careful with."

To maintain safety standards while working with electricity, company workers have to go to classes 12 to 14 days a year to continue to be certified.



Edison Sault Electric Company Lineman Dan Wightman demonstrates safety equipment to students from Mackinac Island Public School Wednesday, May 30.

"We have to study all the time to know what people are using nowadays," Mr. Wightman said. "When I started, things were a lot different."

Although Mackinac Island used to have its own power plant, electricity on Mackinac Island now comes from St. Ignace through submerged cables in the Straits.

As part of the field trip, Mr.

Chambers demonstrated how he would go up to fix a problem by being elevated in an electrical truck bucket into the air. Mr. Chambers wore the proper safety equipment, which he said is vital to the profession.

"They might get electro-zapped and maybe die," second-grader Talon Greenlee said, noting the importance of the job's safety.

The students were also introduced to a number of the company's electrical transformers and warned to keep a distance from them, and Mr. Chambers climbed a pole to demonstrate how they have to manually work on wires.

What do you do if you see a downed wire or open transformer box?

"Don't touch it and call them," second-grader Christian Styburski said.

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