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Office hours

Monday through Friday
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Outage reporting

When reporting an outage, an automated outage reporting system may answer your call. It may ask for your 12-digit account number to help locate the outage site. This number is found on your monthly bill. It's handy to write it down and keep it near the phone.

Suggestions

Please send your Country Living story ideas or comments to the attention of Lisa R. Hooker at South Central Power's Lancaster office.

Electric co-ops well positioned in new Congress

The mid-term election in November 2010 marked a change in the control in the U.S. House of Representatives and a near turnover in the U.S. Senate.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), as well as Ohio Rural Electric Cooperatives (OREC), pay considerable attention to the political landscape. Laws, regulations and policies adopted at the federal and state level can significantly impact co-ops, their employees and membership.

Political action committees

Electric cooperative employees and board of trustees members contribute to NRECA's Action Committee for Rural Electrification® (ACRE), while co-op members can donate through ACRE's Cooperative Owners for Political Action® (COPA).

In 2010, ACRE contributed to 333 federal House and Senate races. Combined, ACRE and COPA contributions were divided 52 percent to Democratic Party candidates and 48 percent to Republican Party candidates. Contribution dollars were similarly divided: 51 percent to Democrats and 49 percent to Republicans.

Committee relationships

The dramatic changes to the composition of the House affect numerous committees that NRECA's legislative staff interacts with. In particular, the House Agriculture Committee lost more than half of its Democratic members. The House Ag committee traditionally has a bipartisan nature and both Chairman Frank Lucas (R-OK) and Ranking Member Collin Peterson (D-MN) are co-op leaders. They currently champion Rural Utilities Service (RUS) energy efficiency and lending ability for baseload generation.

The most notable loss in the House Energy and Commerce Committee was Rep. Rick Boucher (D-VA). He had co-authored a letter opposing the Environmental Protection Agency's potential designation of coal ash as hazardous waste.

Even with the Democrats' control in the Senate shrinking to 52-46 (plus two independents who caucus with the Democrats), some newly elected senators, such as John Hoeven (R-ND) and Joe Manchin (D-WV), have previous records of supporting electric cooperatives.

NRECA also lost some Senate friends, including Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR). She's a former chair of the Agriculture, Nutrition and Forest Committee and prominent Energy and Natural Resources Committee member. Both are important committees that hammer out cooperative-related issues.

The staff of NRECA, OREC and South Central Power look forward to working with all of the members of 112th Congress to meet the needs of electric cooperative customers.

Old refrigerators eat energy and money

Does this sound familiar?

You bought a new refrigerator and moved your old fridge to a garage or basement to keep a few drinks cold. It's also handy to store surplus food.

Old refrigerators, especially those purchased before 1993, use more than twice as much electricity as a new ENERGY STAR model.

What's more, refrigerants in these older appliances weaken over time and door seals start to leak. Both can cause a decline in the appliance's performance.

If you have moved your old refrigerator to an uninsulated location, such as a garage, it will use even more energy during hot weather.

A refrigerator that's in a 90-degree environment, for example, uses nearly 50 percent more power than one in a 70-degree environment.

And if the temperature falls below about 40 degrees in winter, the refrigerator's thermostat may not run its cooling and defrost cycles for the appropriate amount of time.

So pull the plug on that old refrigerator to save energy and money.

For additional tips on how to save energy and money visit www.energysavers.gov or Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives energy saving website at www.TogetherWeSave.com.

The energy advisors at South Central Power also are great sources of energy efficiency information. Call 1-800-282-5064 today to speak the energy advisor in your area.



Leave no lint behind

Household chores like laundry are fairly mundane, but problems like lint buildup in a dryer could lead to higher energy bills due to inefficiency and, ultimately, hazardous conditions in your home.

Maintaining proper air flow is critical to the energy use of a dryer. Without adequate air circulation, heat flow becomes stymied, clothes take longer to dry and it costs more to operate the appliance.

The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM) urges consumers to clean the lint filter after each load and occasionally remove the filter and wash it with a nylon brush and hot, soapy water to remove residue. This not only improves air flow and energy efficiency, but also reduces the chance of a dryer fire.

Over time when consumers forget to clean the lint screen, a build-up can occur that eventually could cause a fire hazard.

Statistics on dryer fires show no difference between natural gas and electric dryers, according to Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Inc., a firm that tests and sets minimum standards for electric-consuming items.

Manufacturers whose products carry the UL mark are required to ship dryers with safety instructions that specify cleaning the lint screen before or after each load. These instructions also recommend keeping dryer exhaust openings and adjacent surrounding areas free from accumulated lint, dust and dirt. It's also suggests having qualified service people periodically clean the dryer's interior and exhaust duct.



Power outages and frozen food

Winter usually means power outage at one time or another. That naturally causes concern about refrigerated and frozen foods.

Whether freezer or refrigerator, open the door only when necessary. Each time, warm air enters and raises the temperature, shortening the time food can be kept safely.

Depending on the temperature in your home, most refrigerated foods will last four to six hours without power. If more time passes, throw out perishables such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk, soft cheeses, eggs and creamy salad dressings.

A well-filled freezer keeps food frozen for two days after power is lost; a half-filled freezer for about one day.

Placing containers of frozen water in a partially filled freezer can help extend the time it stays cool.

If food has thawed partially, but there are still ice crystals, the food may be safely re-frozen. However, partial thawing reduces food quality. Do not refreeze commercially packaged frozen foods, melted ice cream or unbaked pastry products.

If any food has an unusual odor or color, toss it out to be safe.

During extended power outages, consider asking family, friends or neighbors who have electricity to temporarily store some of your perishables.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Heat and cool efficiently with a heat pump

Managing the temperature in a home or business has the hands-down biggest impact on energy costs. In trying to keep warm in winter and cool during summer, the average U.S. homeowner spends \$1,400 annually. That accounts for 56 percent of all home energy expenses.

While this outlay can be trimmed by tweaking efficiency, some folks have taken it a step further and installed a heat pump.

These highly efficient devices can provide both heating and cooling comfort.

As the name implies, heat pumps simply move heat from one place to another.

During winter months they collect and consolidate heat from outside sources and move it inside; during summer months, they reverse the flow and send warm, indoor air out.

In the past, heat pumps often got a bad rap for “cold heat.” Technological improvements have changed that and consumers usually find the heat generated by a heat pump unit to be as warm as other heating systems.

Air-source heat pumps.

The most common heat pump is an air-source heat pump. It resembles an air-conditioning unit and uses the air around it to transfer heat.

Geothermal heat pumps.

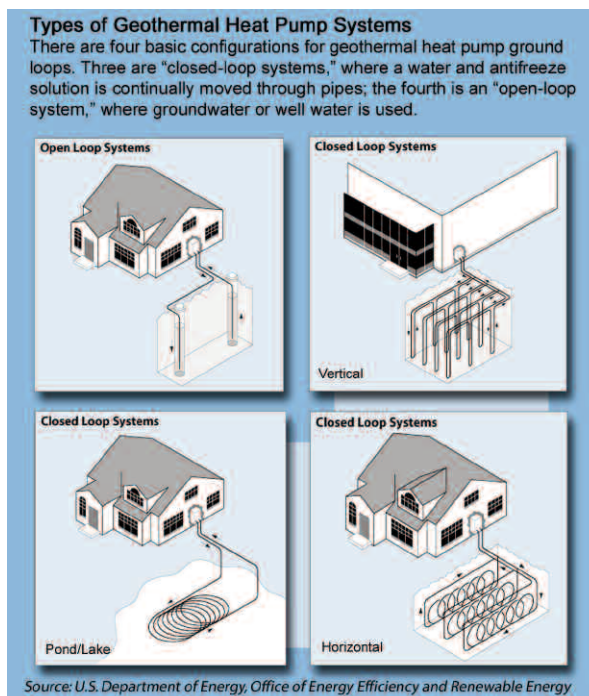
Geothermal heat pumps, also known as groundsource heat pumps, use the earth itself or groundwater as a means of transferring heat.

These models come in two types: a groundwater (open-loop) system uses well water. An earth-coupled (closed-loop) model moves a water and antifreeze solution through underground pipes.

Heat pumps are ENERGY STAR rated, so review the specific savings information for the unit. Each household savings will vary, though, based on geography, number of residents and personal heating and cooling preferences.

Savings also are dependent on the the cost of fuel.

Heat pumps — whether they're geothermal or air-source — can be tricky to install. A good rule of thumb is to hire a North American Technician Excellence (NATE)



certified installer. They've passed a comprehensive test and are knowledgeable about heat pumps, their installation and use.

Contact the South Central Power energy advisor in your area for more information. They can discuss your particular situation and offer insight into the benefits and savings that a heat pump could offer your family.

Sources: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association; Cooperative Research Network; OIT Geo-Heat Center; U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Winter travel tips

Whether you're headed to a sunny climate or to the ski slopes, a winter vacation is great. But it can become a nightmare if you don't properly prepare your home.

Cold weather protection.

Turn your thermostat down, but don't set it too low or turn off the heat. Protect pipes near outside walls from freezing by installing heat tape, insulation or a freeze sensor. Arrange for snow removal, if needed. Unplug appliances that could be damaged when power comes back on after any outages. If your hot water tank has a “vacation” setting, consider using it to save energy

and money in your absence.

Theft protection

Make it appear as if someone is living in the house. Use timers to control lights. If you have a South Central Power security system, it can be programmed to turn lights on and off. Stop mail and newspaper deliveries. Ask neighbors to keep an eye out and leave your phone number with them.

It's a good idea to have someone regularly check the house, furnace, hot water tank and pipes to prevent or catch any leaks, bursts or other unpleasant surprises that may greet you upon your return.

NEWS CURRENTS

Celebrating healthy hearts in February

Heart disease is still America's number one killer, but there are ways to improve your heart's health.

Some rules are familiar: Consume less fat. Eat fruits and vegetables. Keep blood pressure and cholesterol levels in check.

But do you know about these additional ways to boost heart health?

Don't skip breakfast

Most heart attacks occur between 7 a.m. and noon. That's possibly because the cells that help the blood clot, the platelets, are stickiest then. Eating breakfast appears to make platelets less sticky — and less likely to clump together and block a vital artery.

Cut sweets

Sugar is not directly related to heart disease, but limiting these empty calories in your diet leaves more room for heart friendly fiber and nutrients.

Meet the "Bs"

You may have heard about "antioxidants" — vitamins C, E and beta carotene — which appear to slow plaque

formation in the arteries. Now there's additional evidence that folic acid, a B vitamin, and vitamins B6 and B12 may help prevent heart attacks, too.

Lighten up

People who overreact to stressful situations appear more likely to have heart trouble.

Ask about aspirin

Aspirin has been shown to protect the heart by preventing clot formation. But don't start taking aspirin regularly without your doctor's approval. Its side effects can present serious danger to people with certain conditions.

Quit smoking, if you do

Smoking doesn't just affect your lungs. Fact is, you'll cut your risk of a heart attack 50 to 70 percent within five years if you quit. At that point, ex-smokers have about the same risk of heart attack as those who have never smoked.

Get off the couch

Sedentary living — not high cholesterol — is the single biggest factor in heart attack deaths. Just 30 minutes of moderate physical exercise, with your doctor's approval, delivers big benefits.

Touchstone Energy® Achievement Scholarship

Did you overcome adversity, obstacles or personal challenges on your way to excellence?

Tell us about it, you may win a scholarship!

You must be a graduating high school senior whose parents are members of a Touchstone Energy® Ohio rural electric cooperative.

For further information, contact:
Rita Tate at 1-800-282-5064 ext. 6167
for an application. Applications are due March 4.

Four **\$1,675**
scholarships will be awarded

Rules:

1. Applicant must be a graduating high school senior who is the son, daughter or legal ward of an Ohio rural electric distribution cooperative member at the time of the statewide competition. The applicant should be at a minimum in the 60 percentile rank of their high school class with a minimum overall grade-point average of 2.75 (on a 4.0 scale).
2. Character: A Letter of Recommendation from an independent sponsor (school representative, church or community leader, etc.) that explains how the applicant's character has played a role in enabling him/her to succeed. Character traits such as integrity, innovation and accountability should be mentioned. Specific examples of situations that show these character traits and other strong traits are encouraged.
3. Special Achievements: A Letter of Nomination is required from a second independent sponsor outlining the nominee's relevant life experiences and traits which demonstrate determination in the face of adversity and/or commitment to community. Consideration will be given to nominees who have overcome personal or family obstacles, demonstrated achievement through personal initiative, good citizenship, etc.
4. Nominations must be submitted on forms furnished by your local electric cooperative and submitted to the cooperative by its deadline date.
5. Submitted information will be the official nomination form, an official high school transcript, a Letter of Recommendation and a Letter of Nomination.
6. Applicants must have all basic credits for college or proper vocational or technical school entrance. They must be accepted in the accredited college or proper vocational or technical school before the award will be given.
7. Any applicant who, at the time the awards are made, has received a full-tuition scholarship to the school of his/her choice is not eligible for a scholarship from Ohio Rural Electric Cooperatives, Inc.



Touchstone Energy®