EnerStar® A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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www.enerstar.com | A monthly newsletter for co-op members of EnerStar Electric Cooperative

Time matters.

Register for Power Shift by May 15 and earn up to $117 annually.

The time of day that you use power changes how much that power costs your electric cooperative. It's like going to a movie: Evening shows cost more because that's when more people want to see movies. Use power when everyone else is, like when the afternoon is hottest, and that power costs more to EnerStar.

Power Shift helps everyone save by shifting energy usage to off-peak times.

Have us install a switch on your central air conditioner, electric water heater, or pool pump. The switch may be activated to turn off your appliance when demand is up—typically in the afternoons, and for no longer than 15 minutes an hour on your central air conditioner. We won't activate the switch on weekends or holidays, and most people don't even notice the difference.

You'll stay cool (and keep your water hot) while you save energy and help out your community. That's time well spent.

To sign up for PowerShift or for more information, contact EnerStar Electric Cooperative at 800-635-4145.

POWER MOVES

Highlights of the 76th Annual Meeting of Members held on Saturday, March 14, 2015, will be published in the May 2015 issue of this publication. Submission deadlines for this issue fell before the annual meeting.

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Serving the Illinois counties of Edgar, Clark, Vermilion, Douglas and Coles.

Understanding the VALUE of electric cooperatives

There are three main types of electricity providers in the United States. These include the following: investor-owned utilities (IOUs) which serve primarily densely populated areas; municipal-owned utilities which also serve more populated towns and cities, and of course, rural electric cooperatives like EnerStar that serve sparsely populated rural parts of the country.

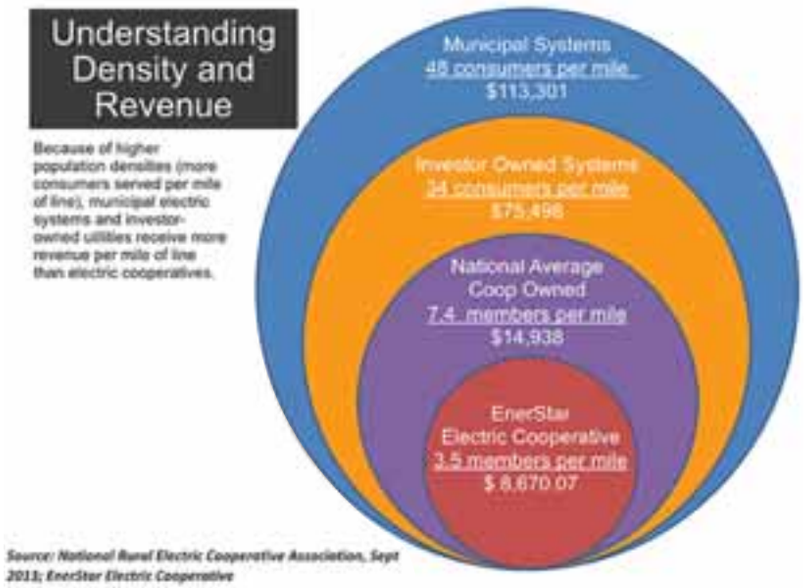
In the utility business, population matters a lot. Since costs to serve a mile of electric line is very similar, the more consumers per mile of line for utilities allows these costs to be spread among more people which can help keep rates lower. At least that is the theory.

The accompanying graphic highlights the density (number of consumers) and revenue per mile of electrical line for IOUs, municipal-owned utilities, electric co-ops and EnerStar Electric Cooperative.

Municipal-owned utilities, which operate in cities and towns, have the greatest density – 48.3 customers per mile of line, generating an average of $113,301 of revenue. IOUs follow with 34 customers per mile of line, while generating average revenues of $75,498. Finally, electric co-ops average 7.4 members (not customers, but members) per mile of line, bringing in an average of $14,938 of revenue per mile.

As you can see, EnerStar's density is much less than the national average. In fact, EnerStar is the third most RURAL electric cooperative in the State of Illinois, serving just 3.5 consumers per mile of line. The national average for electric cooperatives is 7.4 consumers per mile of line. That is a big difference!

Before local rural electric cooperatives, most rural homes did not have electricity. The reason was simple: power companies chose not to serve the sparsely populated rural areas. There was no profit to be had! So our cooperative's founding fathers back in the later 1930s took matters into their own hands and built our not-for-profit electric cooperative that still serves you today. Another way your co-op brings you value!



Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Sept 2013; EnerStar Electric Cooperative

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An old refrigerator can eat up energy and money

Does this sound familiar? You bought a new ENERGY STAR-qualified refrigerator and moved your old fridge to the garage or basement to keep a few drinks cold. EnerStar would like to offer a few tips that can help you save energy and money.

"Old refrigerators tend to use a lot of energy," says Angela Griffin, EnerStar's Manager of Member Services. "A refrigerator bought before 1993 uses more than twice as much energy as a new ENERGY STAR refrigerator. So you're spending a lot of money to keep that refrigerator running." She added that over time, the refrigerant wears out and seals start to deteriorate, causing a decline in the performance of an older refrigerator.

According to Griffin, 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 fridge in a 90 degree environment, for example, uses nearly 50 percent more energy than one in a 70 degree environment.

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

So just by pulling the plug on that old refrigerator, you can save up to $150 a year.

Griffin encouraged members to take advantage of EnerStar's fridge recycling program. The cooperative can arrange to have the fridge, or freezer, picked up free of charge by a company that will recycle up to 95 percent of the unit.

And to make it an even bigger savings, members will also receive $35 for up to two units. Some restrictions apply so call 1-877-395-5535 for complete details.

Get rid of that old refrigerator or freezer before it swipes any more electricity. Not only will we haul it away free, we'll give you **$35*** for the honor.

To get more details—or to schedule your free pickup—call **877-395-5535** or visit **PowerMoves.com/HaulFree**.

EnerStar

*Some conditions and restrictions apply.

EnerStar Issues Capital Credit General Retirement

Checks mailed mid-April for years 1969-1976

At the January 2015 board meeting, the EnerStar Board of Directors voted to return about $775,000 in excess margins to the members.

"We had an excellent year," said EnerStar CEO Peter E. Kollinger. "Several factors resulted in higher kilowatt sales and lower than expected expenses such as few power outages, lower maintenance costs, and historically low interest rates just to name a few."

As a non-profit electric cooperative, EnerStar allocates our annual operating margins, or profits, to members receiving service during the year. These margins are based on usage and are called capital credits. Capital credits represent the member's equity and remain on file until EnerStar's board of directors determines a general refund may be issued.

At the January 2015 meeting, the board voted to issue approximately $502,000 in capital credit refund checks to members who received electric service for years 1969 to 1976. These checks will be mailed in mid-April to those who received electric service during this time period.

This will be the fourth time the board of directors has issued general capital credit refunds since 2006.

On a side note, in early March, the cooperative issued rebates of approximately $273,000 to all members who had active accounts in November 2014. All single-phase accounts who received service during the month will be mailed a rebate check of in the amount of $50. Kollinger explained that the board liked being able to offer a mix of a capital credit refund and a member rebate since it benefits both older and newer memberships.

A buyer's guide to residential generators

Let's face it: rough weather happens. At EnerStar Electric Cooperative, our goal is to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. But when Mother Nature unleashes her fury, power may be out for an extended period of time. Anyone who has experienced an extended power outage has likely mulled over the idea of buying a generator, but before you do – make sure you have all the facts.

The purchase and installation of a generator is an important and serious decision. Properly done, you gain peace of mind knowing your family can ride out any outage with some degree of comfort. But an incorrectly implemented generator can become deadly to you, your family, your neighbors and your electric cooperative's employees.

So, let's look at the decisions you'll need to make when it comes to purchasing a residential generator. First, do you want to back up your entire home or just portions? The biggest drawback to a permanently installed, whole-house generator is the cost. While the advantages are significant, it is a large expense for most folks to cover. The table below illustrates several characteristics of each alternative.

The next decision is sizing the generator to your particular situation. Online tools abound, so if you like to research, just type "generator sizing guide" into your browser and off you go. We prefer you contact EnerStar to help you determine the size.

All this being said, a nice portable generator size is at least 6,500 watts with a startup capacity of around 8,000 watts. When motor loads start, they draw more power than they use when running. This "in rush" of power gets them spinning. Afterwards, their demand for electricity decreases.

The third consideration is how to integrate the generator with your home. Permanent models have dedicated switching devices that handle this chore, while portable models require you to remove them from storage, set them up, connect them and start them up. Here is where the danger mentioned above comes in to play. Improperly connected generators can easily back feed into EnerStar's grid. As electricity flows back into the lines, the transformers boost the voltage to lethal levels. Be sure to closely follow connection instructions, and contact us if you have any questions regarding connecting your generator safely.

Use of the generator can be as simple as plugging appliances directly into it. This is cumbersome and very limiting. Better yet, have a transfer switch installed by a qualified electrician. This device connects to the circuits you want to power. Connect your generator to the dedicated plug, follow the disconnect procedure and fire it up. Now you've got power for your home that's safe for all.

Next, a word about quality. With generators, you definitely get what you pay for. Cheap models are just that. They may last a couple of years, but after that, parts can be impossible to get. Few things are worse than your generator failing to operate when the lights are out. Definitely go for engines with recognizable brand names. They may cost more, but it will certainly be worth it.

It's important to exercise your portable generator regularly. Don't worry, you don't need to walk your generator - it's not that type of exercise. Exercising means connecting load to it and turning it on to be sure it will run. While you're at it, why not let us know you have a generator? We can provide safety and connection tips if needed, and it will enhance our line crew's safety.

For more information about generators or to help you properly size them, contact EnerStar's Tim Haddix at 800-635-4145 at extension 117 or via email at thaddix@enerstar.com. He will be glad to help you out.