



## Youth to Washington Tour

High school sophomores and juniors with a passion for leadership and government are encouraged to apply for an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C. in June! We want to encourage high school students to learn more about government and their role in it... and provide a select group of student leaders with a chance to get an up-close look at their government.

McDonough Power Cooperative will once again sponsor two sophomore or junior students from each high school in its service area to attend Illinois Cooperative Youth Day in Springfield on April 2, 2014.

From that group, two students will be chosen to represent McDonough Power by attending the Youth to Washington Tour, an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C. from June 13 – 20, with other statewide winners. **6326AA13-750C**

The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour has been bringing high school students to Washington D.C. for 55 years. On the tour, students will learn about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government, and walk away with a greater understanding of their role as an American citizen. They participate in National Youth Day, visit with their

representatives and senators, and explore the sights around the nation's capital.

McDonough Power works with area high school staff to select student leaders who are interested in government and the political process and would benefit from this program. If you are a junior or senior in high school (or know someone who might be interested), please contact your school guidance counselor before January 31 for more details.



# McDonough Power Cooperative

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## Coats for Kids

A record number of Area children, 321 to be exact, will be warm this winter thanks to the Cooperative Cares Fund of McDonough Power Cooperative. The cooperative works with the schools in the co-op's service territory to locate children in need of a brand new, warm winter coat. Cooperative employees and directors delivered coats to the schools in the weeks just prior to Thanksgiving. This was the eighth year for the cooperative's "Coats for Kids" program and we have seen a steady climb in the number of coats requested from year to year. This year without question is by far the largest number we've seen to date. "Sometimes we forget how fortunate we are. It's really a privilege to share our goodwill with others who genuinely need it," says President/CEO Mike Smith. "It's always a humbling process for everyone involved in the program." **313B1-1154B**

The Cooperative Cares fund is supported by sales of salvaged scrap metal items as well as a \$5,000 matching grant provided through the Sharing Success program of CoBank, one of the co-op's lenders.



## MEMBER PRIZES

Every month we will have four map location numbers hidden throughout The Wire. If you find the map location number that corresponds to the one on your bill (found above the usage graph), call our office and identify your number and the page that it is on. If correct, you will win a \$10 credit on your next electric bill.





# Think Safety When Operating a Generator

A generator can be a valuable piece of equipment to keep appliances working during a power outage. Generators can be either temporary or permanently installed.

A permanent generator is wired into a house by a qualified electrician using a transfer switch that prevents a generator from feeding electricity back into overhead lines, which can be deadly for linemen.

A temporary generator is powered by gasoline and should not be attached to a circuit breaker, fuse, or outlet. Before ever purchasing a generator you need to know the wattage required to run the appliances you will attach to the generator. You also need to know the surge power, which is the power it takes to turn an appliance on. **4436A9-1210A**

Once you have purchased the proper generator, follow these tips from Safe Electricity to properly operate your generator:

- Read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions to properly ground the generator. Be sure you understand them before hooking up the generator.
- Never operate a generator in a confined area, such as a garage. Generators can produce numerous gases, including toxic and deadly carbon monoxide. They require proper ventilation.
- Generators pose electrical risks especially when operated in wet conditions. Use a generator only when necessary when the weather creates wet or moist conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it. Always ensure that your hands are dry before touching the generator.
- When you refuel the generator, make sure the engine is cool to prevent a fire, should the tank overflow.
- There should be nothing plugged into the generator when you turn it on. This prevents a surge from

damaging your generator and appliances.

- Be sure to keep children and pets away from the generator, which could burn them.
- Shut down the generator properly. Before shutting down a generator, turn off and unplug all appliances and equipment being powered by the generator.
- Remember maintenance between uses. It is also a good idea to inspect the fuel and oil filters, spark plug, oil level and fuel quality and to start the generator on a regular basis before an emergency situation occurs.

For more information on electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).



## Energy Efficiency

### *Tip of the Month*

Open curtains on your south-facing windows during the day to allow sunlight to naturally heat your home, and close them at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows.



# Clearing the Air

## Replace air filters regularly for efficient heating and cooling

By Megan McKay-Noe

**C**logged air filters could add \$82 to your electric bill every year. Checking, changing, or cleaning your filter once a month saves money and extends the life of your home's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system.

More than half of your monthly energy bill goes toward keeping your home comfortable. While air filters prevent pesky dust and annoying allergens from clogging your HVAC system, dirt, like aging arteries, builds up over time. If left unchecked, a dirty filter strains a home's heart and forces the HVAC system to work harder to push conditioned air through tight spaces. This results in higher energy bills and—potentially—system failure.

### Filter Facts

Air filters protect HVAC systems and perform double-duty by collecting some loose dirt from the air. These handy sieves live in duct system slots or in return grilles of central air conditioners, furnaces, and heat pumps.

Successful filters have a short lifespan—the better a filter catches dirt, the faster it gets clogged and must be cleaned or replaced. Leaving a dirty air filter in place cuts a home's air quality and reduces HVAC system airflow.

While removing a clogged filter altogether relieves pressure on the system, the system can't perform well without one. Unfiltered dust and grime accumulate on critical parts like the evaporator coil, causing unnecessary wear and tear.

### Monthly Check-up

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) advises checking an air filter once a month and replacing it at least every three months. It's critical to inspect and replace filters before seasons of heavy use like summer and winter.

If you have pets or smokers in the home, filters clog quickly. Remodeling projects or furniture sanding add more dirt than normal; a filter may need to be changed before the average three-month lifespan expires.

Turn your heating and cooling system off

before checking your filter. Slide the filter out of your duct work, and look for layers of hair and dirt. Run a finger across the filter. If the finger comes away dirty or there's a line left on the filter, it's time for a change.

When replacing the filter, make sure the arrow on the filter indicating the direction of the airflow points toward the blower motor. To help schedule monthly check-ups, write the date on the side of the filter so you know when it needs to be checked again. Once you've made the change, turn your system back on.

### Filtering Choices

Shopping for a new filter? Before you leave home, write down the size printed on the side of your current filter. If you get a filter that's too small, dirt will get around the barrier and invade your system.

There are several different types of filters and levels of efficiency. Filters are either flat or pleated; pleated filters offer extra surface area to hold dirt, making them more efficient.

The most common filters use layered fiberglass fibers reinforced with metal grating. Some filters boost efficiency by using polyester fibers. Electrostatic filters are made from positively- and negatively-charged fibers and capture smaller debris—the charge actively pulls particles from the air like iron filings onto a magnet. No power connection is required, and the charge does not fade over time. The filters best able to capture small debris are high efficiency particulate arrestance (HEPA) filters, but these deluxe filters are mainly used in hospitals and office buildings, not in homes.

Air filters are rated by a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV). Ranging from one to 20, this scale gauges a filter's effectiveness at blocking debris. Low MERV-rated filters offer high airflow into a cooling or heating system, but only catch large air particles. A higher rating isn't always better—those filters block more dirt but also reduce system airflow. Most experts recommend filters with a MERV 6 or higher.

Manufacturers are not required to post MERV on filter packaging. Brands like 3M's

Filtrete instead list levels of microparticle performance rating—higher numbers mean the filter catches more particles. Home Depot's Air Filter Performance Rating system ranks filters by good, better, best, and premium. No matter what system a store or manufacturer uses, better (and more expensive) filters mean higher MERV scores.

If a family member suffers from allergies, a high MERV filter keeps out excess dander, smoke, and other allergens. Ask a heating and cooling professional what type of filter works best for your home and family needs.

Once you find a filter that works well in your home, it's a good idea to keep spare filters on hand. Basic filters cost anywhere from \$2 to \$10; electrostatic filters may range from \$18 to \$25.

### More Efficiency Boosters

Before summer hits, clean cooling system coils inside and outside the home. Leaves, dirt, and other debris gather around a home's air conditioner throughout fall and winter months. These intruders keep the coils from operating at top efficiency, both shortening the lifespan of the unit and ratcheting up summer cooling bills. **7229C9-718B**

Just as clogged air filters force your system to work harder, blocked vents strain your system. Clean air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators. Make sure air ducts are not blocked by furniture, rugs, or window treatments.

Want more ways to save? Take the home energy savings tour and see how little changes add up to big savings at [www.TogetherWeSave.com](http://www.TogetherWeSave.com).

*Sources: ENERGY STAR, U.S. Department of Energy, American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, Home Depot, 3M, Permatron*

*Megan McKay-Noe writes on energy efficiency issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.*