

## Cooperatives Are the Fabric of Your Community

Last year, the U.S. Senate—building off similar action by the United Nations General Assembly—designated 2012 as International Year of Cooperatives. As a result, cooperatives everywhere are celebrating our unique not-for-profit, member-owned and -controlled business model.

If you've read *The Wire*, then you know McDonough Power is an electric cooperative—as a result, you and everyone else who receives electric service from us is a *member*, not a customer. Because you and your fellow members govern how McDonough Power operates, our top priority remains providing safe and reliable service and keeping your electric bills affordable. Local control also means we're in the business of improving the quality of life in the



communities we serve, from offering college scholarships to advice on how you can make your home or business more energy efficient. **11125B8-1008C**

Electric co-ops are just one type of cooperative operating in America. Dairy cooperatives produce nearly 90 percent of our nation's milk. Credit unions? They're cooperatives, too, with more than 8,000 across the country serving 91 million consumers. You can also find housing, hardware, and even funeral co-ops throughout the U.S.

Some agricultural marketing cooperatives have become household names: Sunkist, Ocean Spray and Blue Diamond Almonds for example.

Together, all of us are a key part of our local economy. We provide good jobs to folks who live right here—your

neighbors and friends. We deliver goods and services that keep our communities humming. We're happy to lend a hand when we're able, and we enjoy being involved with schools and community organizations.

At McDonough Power we return any excess profits, called margins, to you in the form of capital credits. That money then gets reinvested locally—perhaps at a grocery store or other retail outlet, which in turn allows the owners to hire more people.

While not a new concept—Benjamin Franklin started the first cooperative, the Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire, in 1752 (it still operates today!)—the cooperative form of business continues as an integral part of our lives each day.

## Youth to Washington

Scott Knicl of Macomb and Caitlin Suter of Avon represented McDonough Power Cooperative in Washington, D.C., during the annual "Youth to Washington" Tour, June 15-22. The event, sponsored by the electric and telephone cooperatives of Illinois since the late 1950s, is an introduction to our democratic form of government and cooperatives for rural youth.

The students met with Congressman Bobby Schilling and were among 75 rural Illinois youth



From left are: Suter, Congressman Schilling and Knicl.

leaders selected for the trip. The Illinois students joined more than 1,500 young leaders from across the country. In addition to the Capitol, they also visited Arlington National Cemetery, the Washington National Cathedral, several Smithsonian Museums, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the World War II Memorial, memorials to Presidents Lincoln, Jefferson, Washington and Roosevelt, the National Archives, the Newseum and a number of other historical sites.



## McDonough Power Cooperative

1210 West Jackson Street  
P.O. Box 352  
Macomb, Illinois  
61455-0352

309-833-2101

[www.mcdonoughpower.com](http://www.mcdonoughpower.com)

Office hours:  
7 a.m. - 4 p.m. - Weekdays

### DIRECTORS

Michael Cox, Chairman

Steve Lynn, Vice Chairman

Steve Youngquist, Secretary

Stan Prox, Treasurer

Robert J. Dwyer

Steve Hall

Walter Lewis

Jeffrey Moore

Jerry Riggins

John D. McMillan, Attorney

All Co-op Electric  
Outages 837-1400

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative  
The power of human connections



## Saving Money is No Joke

**W**e've all heard this joke: How many people does it take to change a lightbulb? While the comedic value of the answer sometimes leaves a bit to be desired, the underlying principle—simple changes can needlessly get complicated—stays the same.

The average home contains 40 light fixtures, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Thanks to a series of staggered federal standards and more lighting choices than ever before, the average homeowner could save \$50 every year by using more energy efficient lightbulbs.

This year, the first of several federal lightbulb efficiency standards kicked in, requiring manufacturers to stop making 100-watt (W) incandescent bulbs in favor of ones using less electricity to produce the same amount of light (lumens). This doesn't mean the outmoded bulbs went away—you can still find old stock at stores around town. But keep in mind that those traditional incandescent bulbs waste 90 percent of your lighting costs as heat.

If you don't want to stray too far from the bulbs you're used to, consider halogen incandescent lightbulbs. Color options and dimming abilities mirror their time-tested forebearers, but they cut energy consumption by 25 percent and last three times longer.

Another style we've championed for years is the compact fluorescent lamp (CFL). These swirly bulbs slash energy use by 75 percent compared to traditional incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer.

But for folks who don't like the pigtail CFL shape or who worry about the very

small amount of mercury in these bulbs, another, brighter option looms on the horizon: light-emitting diodes (LEDs). These solid-state products have been used in electronics since the 1960s, and manufacturers are ramping up efforts to transform them into the perfect replacement bulb. LEDs require 75 percent to 80 percent less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs and can last 25 times longer—by far the longest lifespan yet.

DOE estimates it'll take more than six years for a \$40, 800-lumen (60-W-equivalent) LED to pay for itself. But investments in manufacturing and increased demand should help drive down costs. By 2021, LED prices are expected to drop by a factor of 10, and that's good news for anyone who enjoys the thought of only changing a lightbulb once every 20 years or so.

In January 2013, a new set of lightbulb efficiency standards fall into place, this time halting production of inefficient 75-W incandescent bulbs. A year later, household lightbulbs using between 40-W to 100-W must consume at least 28 percent less energy than classic bulbs, saving Americans an estimated \$6 billion to \$10 billion in lighting costs annually.

So what's the punchline? Every time you change a lightbulb, buy a more efficient replacement. No matter which kind you opt for, you'll save money every time you flip a light switch—and that's nothing to chuckle about.

Learn more at [www.EnergySavers.gov/Lighting](http://www.EnergySavers.gov/Lighting). **11128B4A-1004B**



# LABOR DAY

**Our office will be closed for Labor Day on  
Monday, September 3, 2012.**



# What to Look for In a HVAC Contractor

By Madeline Keimig, Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

It's no secret that replacing your heating and cooling system can be a headache. When's the right time? What kind of system is best? Where can I find a reliable contractor?

Because the right contractor remains the critical cog in this process—for determining the type and size of the unit needed, explaining your options, and proper installation—consider these tips before making a selection.

## Ask around

What are the contractor's licensing and qualifications? Is the contractor a member of state and national contractor associations, such as Air Conditioning Contractors of America? Is he or she adequately insured?

"Most people don't realize that almost 50 percent of their energy bill comes from an HVAC [heating, ventilation, and air conditioning] system," explains Alan Shedd, director of residential & commercial energy programs for Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives, the national branding campaign for electric co-ops. "It's important to have the right person put in and maintain the equipment."

Word of mouth provides a valuable resource, so ask neighbors and friends if they can recommend a good contractor—or if there's someone you should avoid. And remember to check on what a prospective contractor guarantees and whether any follow-up services, such as a maintenance agreement, are offered. "It's important to have these conversations before work begins," Shedd stresses. "That way, if there are any surprises after installation, you know what to expect."

## What the contractor and you should do

After you ask these questions, a good contractor should start by inspecting your home and old system and then explaining your options.

Be sure to get the estimated annual operating cost of the proposed

HVAC system at different efficiency levels, as recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR program. Air conditioners are measured by Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) and Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER). SEER is calculated by dividing the amount of cooling provided during a normal year by energy used—the higher the SEER, the more efficient the unit. EER helps if you want to know how a system operates at a specific temperature. This will help you to determine the total cost over its lifetime.

Shedd advises asking for three written estimates of the work: what is being done, what equipment is being provided, and when installation will begin and be completed. **11128D8-1004B**

"A contractor should explain what is included—the best value may not come from whoever offers the lowest price," Shedd warns.

## NATE certification

Finally, consider looking for someone who is NATE (North American

Technician Excellence) certified. Remember, though, because NATE is a voluntary process, a contractor isn't necessarily a bad installer if she or he doesn't have the credentials, contends Brian Sloboda, a senior program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network, an arm of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

"NATE-certified contractors will have gone through the steps to prove they have the skills necessary for their job, although it isn't a guarantee that they are good," he cautions. "But it does provide some extra evidence to help consumers know that the person they're hiring has been tested."

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

Madeline Keimig writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives, the national branding program for 700-plus electric cooperatives in the U.S.



## Tip of the Month

Using compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) in outdoor lights can save money and energy because these lights stay on the longest. ENERGY STAR-qualified CFLs use 75 percent less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs. To save even more, look for fixtures designed for outdoor use that have automatic daylight shutoff and motion sensors. Learn more at [www.energysavers.gov](http://www.energysavers.gov).

Source: U.S. Department of Energy





# Bringing Home (A Safe) Baby

**P**reparing for a baby—whether you're a new parent or an extended family member—is no small task. Along with a little bundle of joy comes a big responsibility for feeding, cleaning, and providing a secure environment.

Bumps and boo-boos will be part of a child's life. But make the effort to keep a baby safe from critical dangers like electricity.

## Splish, splash safely

A baby's first bathtub may be on a countertop or in the kitchen sink. Be mindful of outlets in the area. Be sure they are special ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets that will minimize a shock if exposed to water during splashy bath time adventures. Also, set your water heater to 120 degrees or below to help prevent scalding and save energy. **11216C1-1066B**

## While you were sleeping

Sleep may be fleeting with a new baby, but there are precautions. Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms outside all bedrooms and near fuel-burning heaters. Follow current guidelines on crib and mattress safety and sleep positions.

## Techie Baby

New and improved electronics come out every day to make parenting easier, especially for monitoring a baby in another room. Follow manufacturer-recommended safety measures, keeping cords contained and properly mounting gear. Take care not to overload outlets with new electronics.

## Don't Blink

Your baby won't be little for long. Before you know it, he or she will be mobile and new responsibilities arise. You may think a room looks safe, but peer down to a baby's level to see what else catches your eye. The new perspective may alert you to outlets, cords, and other hazards within a child's reach.



You can't plan for everything, and it may not be possible to test all products and baby items before a baby comes home. Look for the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) mark on home electronics. UL tests items for product safety to give you a degree of comfort in new purchases.

For more advice, visit [www.safety-at-home.com](http://www.safety-at-home.com).

*Source: Underwriters Laboratories  
Kelly Trapnell writes on safety and 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.*

## 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.

