



You can build a Certified Comfort Home



Alan W. Wattles

Across The President's Desk

For many years, electric cooperative energy advisors across the state have been helping members who are building new homes make sure their homes are energy efficient and comfortable. Several years ago, these cooperative experts put their heads together and produced an easy to read manual called the “Certified Comfort Home.” Now that manual has been updated and is available free of charge to electric cooperative members.

“There is plenty of information in there on energy efficiency and building techniques, if someone is willing to search for it. But we wanted to put together an easy-to-follow booklet that shares the information that member service advisors have learned and taught over the years,” says Allan Masterson, Director of Member Services. “Something, I think, that all advisors have found is that some builders and contractors don’t always understand that building energy efficiency in a new home really isn’t that much more expensive. Several of the techniques are really simple concepts that just take

some time and effort but can pay real dividends in energy savings and comfort in their homes,” he says.

Although the “Certified Comfort Home” manual contains fairly detailed instructions and diagrams, it is also easy for the consumer without any construction background or training to understand.

Masterson says, “Though the booklet does get into detail on many projects, it has an index inside the front cover that highlights the main ideas in the booklet. In the back, there is a “Summary-Construction Specifications” and a listing of materials with their “R” values.”

If you don’t remember anything else, remember this...

- Though some of the items presented in this booklet seem insignificant, it is the use of the total concept that provides for significant energy savings.
- Corner and partition construction should minimize air pockets and allow for full insulation.
- It is recommended that cellulose insulation be used in ceilings and walls.
- When insulating the basement or crawl space, do not forget to insulate the box sills.
- Caulking and sealing of the exterior wall and its components is very important to the overall efficiency of the home.

- The attic area should be insulated to a minimum R-40.
- Basements have more heat loss than most people realize.
- Geothermal and air-to-air heat pumps, which move heat energy rather than create it, can be three times more efficient than gas furnaces.
- Because window and glass doors are major areas of heat loss and gain, they should be sized so they are no more than 10 percent of the floor area.
- Any openings through the ceiling to the attic should be analyzed for ways to minimize air infiltration.



For the complete Certified Comfort Home manual, please call Allan Masterson at Monroe County Electric Co-Operative – 939-7171 or 1-800-757-7433. You can also email at amasterson@mceec.org.

Carbon Monoxide:

It's Odorless and Deadly

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, tasteless, invisible gas that each year claims more than 2,300 lives, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association. Additionally, the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission reports approximately 10,000 people annually seek medical attention for unintentional CO poisoning caused by a house-related appliance.

Source of Carbon Monoxide

- Fuel-burning household appliances are potential sources of CO poisoning. Follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule for these appliances to be working properly.
- Do not leave your vehicle idling in an attached garage. The CO gas can seep into your home through doors and floorboards.

Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Dizziness, severe headaches, nausea, sleepiness, fatigue/weakness and disorientation or confusion.
- High concentration levels of CO can be fatal in a matter of minutes.

Prevention

- Install CO alarms with a battery backup on every level of a home and in sleeping areas.
- If a CO alarm sounds in your home, never ignore it. Get your family out of the house immediately and open the windows to allow the CO to dissipate.
- Call emergency personnel from a neighbor's house or a cell phone once you are out of the house.

Source: Kidde; U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission; Journal of the American Medical Association



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Celebrate Earth Day with energy savings

Earth Day turns 41 on April 22! Celebrate by saving energy — the quickest, cheapest, cleanest way to extend our world's energy supplies and help the environment by improving efficiency.

Follow these simple tips for greater energy efficiency and lower costs:

- Replace regular incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) that use only a quarter of the energy to produce the same amount of light. CFLs help reduce electric bills and the bulbs last four times longer.
- A well-placed tree can reduce cooling costs and provide a relaxing and refreshing spot to enjoy the outdoors. Remember when planting a tree to be aware of overhead power lines and avoid taking unnecessary risks (see sidebar).



- Clean or change filters monthly during the cooling or heating seasons. An efficiently running cooling system will save dollars.
- Cooling costs can be lowered by about 3 percent for each one-degree increase in the thermostat setting.
- Weather-stripping and caulking are inexpensive measures to seal air leaks and boost overall efficiency.
- When replacing appliances large or small, look for Energy Star qualified products.
- Turn off lights, televisions and other electric appliances when leaving a room.
- Operate your clothes washer and dryer and try cooking and baking during cooler morning and evening hours.
- Take cell phones and other items off chargers once they have finished charging. These items continue to use energy until they are unplugged.

Know where to plant that young tree

Many people plant trees during the spring, especially around National Arbor Day, occurring April 29th this year. Planting young trees has many environmental and beautification benefits, but Monroe County Electric Co-Operative wants to remind everyone to be aware of electrical hazards while planting this year.

Seek help from professionals when choosing and placing trees and bushes, and remember the following:

- Consider mature height of trees. Never plant a tree near a power line that could grow within 25 feet of it. Tall growing trees should be planted a



Know what's below. Call before you dig.

minimum of 20 feet away from power lines, and 50 feet away to avoid future pruning. A mature height of less than 15 feet is recommended for trees planted near power lines.

- Do not plant near underground utility services. Tree roots can grow to interfere with underground pipes, cables and wires.

Future repairs to these facilities could damage the health and beauty of nearby plants and trees, or even require removal.

- Keep areas around electric meters, transformers or other electrical equipment free of any vegetation that could limit utility service access.
- Before digging, call the underground utility locator service to mark the location of underground utilities so that accidental contact, damage and injuries can be avoided.

Call *JULIE* at 811 or
800-892-0123.

Second refrigerators: convenient or costly?

Many homeowners keep a second refrigerator in the garage or the basement. Typically, it's the fridge that used to be in the kitchen. When it came time to replace it with a newer model, it seemed like a waste to dispose of it, so it found a new home by the workbench or in the rec room. But keeping that refrigerator may prove to be an even bigger waste than tossing it out — a waste of money, that is.

You see, there have been a lot of improvements in refrigerator technology over the last few years. In fact, refrigerators made before 1993 use roughly twice as much electricity as today's ENERGY STAR-qualified models. So that extra refrigerator could be adding an extra \$120 or more to your annual electric bills.

ENERGY STAR is a federal program that helps consumers identify the most energy-efficient appliances, and refrigerators that meet the program's standards have a variety of features that allow them to provide the performance you need with less electricity. Examples of those features include higher-efficiency compressors, better insulation and more accurate thermostats.

Why is efficiency so important when it comes to refrigerators? In most homes, the refrigerator is the third biggest user of energy after the heating/cooling systems and



the water heater. If you replace a refrigerator that you bought in 1990 with one of today's ENERGY STAR-qualified models, you could save enough electricity to light your entire home for four months. If we all use less energy, we can reduce the impact of greenhouse gases, too.

Whether you have just one refrigerator or two, there are several steps you can take to make them as energy-efficient as possible:

- Set the refrigerator temperature between 35 and 38 degrees Fahrenheit, and the freezer at zero degrees (use an inexpensive thermometer to verify the temperature).

- Check that the door seals are airtight by closing the door on a piece of paper. If you can easily pull the paper out, replace the seals.
- Leave space between the refrigerator's coils and the wall so that air can circulate properly around the coils, and so that you can vacuum them when they become dusty (follow your owner's manual).
- Don't place a refrigerator next to a stove or in direct sunlight, because even the best-insulated model will have to work harder to stay cool.

Finally, if you still want to keep a second refrigerator for extra storage or for use during the holidays or other occasions, turn it off when you're not using it. If you turn it back on a day or two before you need it, it should be cool when you're ready.

Would you like to know more about the ways choosing the right appliances can lower your electric bills, and how quickly a higher-efficiency appliance will pay for itself? Our Energy Advisor will be happy to answer your questions and show you how to compute the potential savings. It's one more way your local electric cooperative provides advice when you want it, and help when you need it.



Monroe County Electric Co-Operative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

will be closed on

Good Friday, April 22nd.

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