Norris Electric News

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Retirement

Thursday, November 21, 2013 was the last day of work for Keith Wakefield after more than 34 years at Norris Electric Cooperative.

Keith started working at Norris Electric as summer help with the brush crew while attending classes during the school year. After graduating from Eastern Illinois University he starting working full time. Over the years Keith has worked as a groundman/truck driver and as power polyphase tester. Keith said the biggest change at the co-op during his employment was the upgrade from basic consumer-read meters to the automatic meter reading system.

Keith commented that he has enjoyed working at the co-op with a great bunch of men and office ladies. He said that it was an honor to retire from the same company as his father, Eldon Wakefield. They each worked at the cooperative more than 30 years.

Keith has 3 children and 3 grandchildren and plans to spend more time with them now that he has retired. He also plans to devote more time to fishing and to head south for some winter months.

Cake and punch was enjoyed by current and retired employees in Keith's honor. He received a jacket and gift card. Keith has been a valuable asset to the co-op and everyone at Norris Electric wishes him a very happy retirement!

Keith with his daughters Stephanie and Heather, two grandsons and camera shy granddaughter.

Norris Electric Cooperative • 8543 N. State Highway 130 • Newton, Illinois 62448 • 618-783-8765
Office hours: Monday — Thursday 7:00 a.m. — 5:00 p.m

Clearing the Air

Replace air filters regularly for efficient heating and cooling

By Megan McKoy-Noe

Clogged 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 lose 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 is 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.

Just as clogged air filters force your system to work harder, blocked vents strain your system. Clean air registers,

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5 New Year's Energy Resolutions

Have you made any new Year's resolutions this year? If you did, it may have involved stopping a bad habit. You may have some other bad habits you're not even aware of that are costing you money! Take a look at these five resolutions that can help you save money all year long.

1. I will pull the plug. I will unplug electronics like my television, DVR, computer and video game console when not in use. I'll save even more by unplugging battery chargers and items with digital clocks. I could save more than $175 a year.
2. I will dress warmly. I won't keep my home warm like summer. I'll throw on a sweater and maybe a blanket and lower the thermostat. Just turning it from 70 to 68 degrees could save me more then $184 a year. I'll lower the temperature even more at night or when I'm gone and save even more.
3. I will use my ceiling fans. I used the ceiling fans this summer to stay cool. Now I'll wipe off the dust and run them on reverse to bring the warm air down from the ceiling.
4. I won't waste money on laundry. I will only wash full loads of laundry and use cold water whenever I can. I'll use the drying sensor setting on my dryer and clean the lint trap before each load.
5. I will wash dishes for less. I will review my dishwasher settings before pressing start, and only wash full loads. I won't use pot scrubbing or high heat unless I really need it. I'll shut off heat dry and crack open the door to finish drying the dishes.

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.

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.

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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.

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 McKoy-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.

Weathering a Winter Storm

When ice and heavy snow bring down limbs and power lines, safety is a consideration indoors and out. Make sure you know how to weather the storm.

When outside, stay away from downed power lines:

- A power line does not need to be sparking or arcing to be energized;. Equipment near power lines can also be energized and dangerous.
- Lines that appear to be "dead" can become energized as crews work to restore power, or sometimes from improper use of emergency generators. Assume all low and downed lines are energized and dangerous. If you see a downed or sagging line, contact your utility.
- Motorists should never drive over a downed line as snagging a line could pull down a pole or other equipment and cause other hazards.
- Be careful approaching intersections where traffic or crossing lights may be out.
- If you plan to use a generator, know how to operate it safely

Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives.

Before a winter storm, you should have supplies on hand, and know how to stay warm:

- Always keep a battery-powered radio or TV, flashlights, and a supply of fresh batteries. You should also have water, blankets and nonperishable food.
- When power goes out, it often comes back in spikes. This can damage electronics. Keep your electronics safe by unplugging them when the power goes out. Leave one lamp or switch on as a signal for when your power returns.
- To prevent water pipes from freezing, keep faucets turned on slightly so that water drips from the tap. Know how to shut off water valves in case a pipe bursts.
- Never use a charcoal grill to cook or heat with inside the home. Burning charcoal gives off deadly carbon monoxide gas. Charcoal grills should only be used outdoors.
- If you live with a child or elderly person, you may need to take them somewhere with power so they can stay warm. If you are healthy enough to stay home safely, there are ways to stay warm: stay inside and dress warmly in layered clothing.
- Close off unneeded rooms.
- When using an alternate heat source, follow operating instructions, use fire safeguards and be sure to properly ventilate.

Add a Little Light to Your Night

There's no place like home – and at nightfall, you'll have peace of mind with a night light from your electric cooperative.

Nothing discourages a would-be burglar or trespasser like a brilliant night light. Today's night lights are brighter and more efficient than ever. And since the night light turns itself on at dusk and off at dawn, it's there when you need it, automatically.

A night light is an affordable way to provide safety and protection for your family and possessions.

Norris Electric offers the following night lighting:

100-watt high pressure sodium area light	$7.00 per month
250-watt high pressure sodium directional light	$17.00 per month
400-watt high pressure sodium directional light	$20.50 per month
1000-watt metal halide directional light	$31.00 per month

For more information about the night lights call Norris Electric Cooperative at 1-877-783-8765.

Save the Date

Annual meeting Saturday, Feburary 8, 2014