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remodel?

Homeowners weigh
improvements
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values



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10 TIME TO REMODEL?

Weigh the costs versus the appeal and efficiencies of home improvement to determine whether you should move ahead with your projects.

Volume 70, No. 1, May 2012

4 COMMENTARY

With new districts and new faces on the ballot, your cooperatives want to help you be more informed about your candidates for government office.

6 CURRENTS

More than 250 students from around the state meet with legislators at the capitol.

14 SAFETY & HEALTH

Kick off your boating season by checking off all the safety hazards.

16 YARD & GARDEN

Don't let pesticides invade your waterways and destroy your peace of mind.

18 ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Doug Rye gives tips to help you cut your utility bills.

20 KEEP YOUR INDOOR AIR FLOWING

James Dulley says keeping the air conditioner clean is a task worth tackling. He gives instructions on how to do it.

22 FINEST COOKING

24 POWERED UP

25 MARKETPLACE

27 2012 YEAR OF COOPERATIVES

Farm Credit Services stands ready to help Illinois farmers grow their operations.

30 DATEBOOK

Vote in 2012

More than ever rural citizens need to be politically engaged

We've just come out of the spring primary election season and there are two things that are very obvious. Following the census, redistricting has dramatically changed state and Congressional legislative districts, which means there are new candidates on your ballot that you really don't know. Secondly, fewer people are exercising their right to vote.

Every citizen has the privilege to vote. We talk about how important it is to vote, but with every passing election, fewer people are voting. I know it's difficult. You go to the ballot booth and realize, "I don't know who these people are." Your local representative is no longer on your ballot.

It behooves us as citizens to know who the candidates are, research their information and make an informed vote. That's one reason to visit the website of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (www.aiec.coop) and your local cooperative's web portal to view "America's Electric Cooperative's Vote 2012," which gives you a link to help you develop your knowledge of candidates and their positions on issues of importance.

This year alone, there are 435 congressional elections. Together with 42 million people served by cooperatives, co-op members represent a large voting block. Your vote is critically important. The "America's Electric Cooperative's Vote 2012," website is designed to help you learn about all candidates, from local to national races, and can even help you register to vote if you've recently moved. If someone in your family hasn't registered to vote encourage them to do so now.

Speaking of moving, the population shifts in Illinois are alarming. With each census we realize there are fewer

people living outside the urban areas in Illinois, especially down state. Illinois will have one less member of Congress representing down-state citizens, dropping from 19 members to 18.

If an issue comes up and needs 60 votes for passage, we will have to work harder to get that number for passage. As an example, Congressman John Shimkus serves the largest land area in Illinois just to have the same number of people in his district as a representative from a densely populated urban area in Chicago. So it's important to know who we elect and it's key they understand our issues.

You may have noticed on the nightly news, the debate on the Keystone Pipeline that would transmit tar-sands oil 1,700 miles from Alberta, Canada, to the Gulf Coast of the U.S. On one Sunday morning in November, the environmental lobby was able to mobilize more than 10,000 supporters to protest outside the White House. That gets the attention of our elected officials and the national media and not surprising that issue was slowed up for more deliberation.

If there was an issue of that importance to the electric cooperative program, could we mobilize that number to tell our officials and the media why an issue could be devastating to the reliability or cost of our rural electric program? I'd like to believe we have that kind of grassroots support for rural issues and issues important to electric co-op members.

Nearly 50 leaders of the electric cooperatives in Illinois recently attended a grassroots summit in our nation's capital to learn more about ways for all of us to be more politically effective. And that's why we will step up grassroots member

education efforts in the coming months. We want to make sure we've done our job in keeping you better informed, so that you understand the issues and how they impact you in terms of usage of electricity, the cost of the generation and transmission to your home or farm and how it may affect your quality of life. We will be giving you information to help you communicate with your member of Congress or state legislature about why certain issues are good or bad in terms of impact on affordability on your electric bill. You are the ones who elect the members of the Illinois General Assembly and decide whether they are doing a good job.

Political clout has always been critical to the survival of electric and telephone cooperatives. Broad-based, bipartisan congressional support led to funding for the Rural Electrification Administration in the 1930s and continues to sustain the Rural Utilities Service today. Many of the top issues your co-op's management team and board of directors struggle with today are political and regulatory in nature.

We have taken for granted for a long time that electric service will always be here and be affordable. With all the regulations being promulgated, it's making it more complicated and more expensive to provide electric service. You as a member can help us articulate that to our elected officials.

Duane Noland, President/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives is a former state senator, active on his family farm near Blue Mound and a member of Shelby Electric Cooperative.



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Illinois farmland values continue upward spiral

The prices being paid for farmland across Illinois continue their upward spiral with the tops being in the \$10,000 to \$13,000 per acre range across the state. This is according to the 2012 Farmland Values and Lease Trends Report released in March by the Illinois Society of Professional Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers.

The top price of \$13,000 per acre was for a November 2011 sale of 37.7 acres in Christian County. Sales in the \$10,000 per acre range were common across a number of regions in the state. A good part of this tremendous move in Illinois crop land values is based on increasing farm income returns, and expectations of strong income into the future, says Don McCabe, AFM, general

chairman of the Land Values Survey and Conference.

Respondents indicated that farmland values increased between 20 and 21 percent across land classes during 2011, says Gary Schnitkey, Ph.D., Department of Agriculture and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois.

Yearly increases in land prices have averaged 6.7 percent across all of Illinois between 1970 and 2011. But yearly increases have averaged 12 percent from 2005 to 2011.

Rents have also increased. For excellent quality farmland, rents increased \$60 per acre from \$319 per acre in 2011 to \$379 per acre in 2012.

For more information go to www.ispfmra.org. ■

SIPC reduces costs, holds base rate even in 2011

Members of Southern Illinois Power Cooperative (SIPC) in Marion were updated on the organization's financial condition and reductions in power cost during the power cooperative's Annual Meeting of Members held in March. SIPC was able to hold base rates even for 2011.

"Optimism began to grow in 2011 with SIPC achieving excellent reliability at the Marion coal and gas-fired plants. Additionally, while loads from most of the SIPC membership ranged from 1 to 7 percent below budget, the station-service load required for Prairie State through member Tri-County contributed to year-end margins," reported President and General Manager, Scott Ramsey.

In addition, in 2010 and 2011 SIPC reduced the cost of power generation to 7 percent and reduced purchase power costs by 34.3 percent since 2008.

"SIPC also saved approximately \$700,000 by purchasing an abandoned utility line which still had good life in it," said Ramsey. "The line was connected into the new SIPC line sections as part of a new project for an SIPC members' substation."

Secretary-Treasurer, James Scherrer said, "SIPC generated margins of \$2,200,000 in 2011. SIPC's equity

was 7.27 percent, Dec. 31, 2011. The equity level has declined in recent years due to increased borrowing. Forecasts show our equity rising in 2012 and future years."

Sales to the seven distribution co-op members fell by 64 million kWh or 3 percent due to the mild winter and slow economy. On Jan. 31, 2013, SIPC will begin selling power to Norris

Electric Cooperative, and its load will add 400,000 megawatt-hours annually.

Chairman Richard Liefer said investing with other electric cooperatives and municipal utilities in Prairie State Energy Campus was a huge step for the co-op. "This investment into PSGC's future is once again leading the charge for growth of our co-op." ■



During SIPC's Annual Meeting in March, the following men were re-elected as board officers. They are (from l to r) Chairman Richard Liefer of Red Bud, Secretary-Treasurer James Scherrer of Ridgway and Vice Chairman Joe Voss of Carlyle, pictured with Scott Ramsey, SIPC President and General Manager.

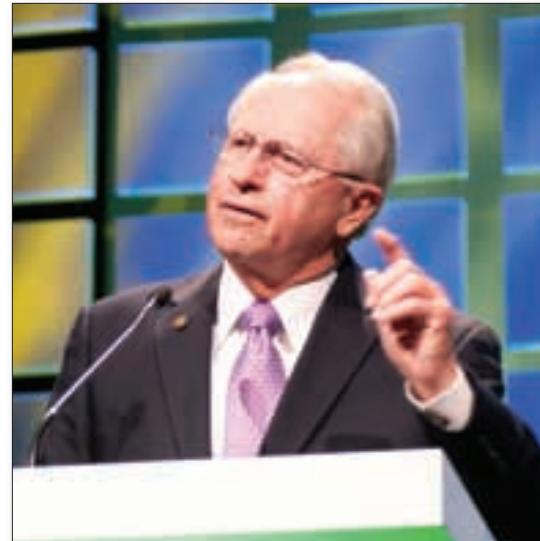
Co-op leader expresses disappointment with proposed EPA greenhouse gas regulations

In March, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Glenn English made the following statement on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) proposed greenhouse gas regulations:

"NRECA and its member electric cooperatives are extremely disappointed to learn that the Obama Administration, in a New Source Performance Standard issued today by the EPA, has jettisoned American coal from the President's 'all-of-the-above' energy strategy.

"Because commercially viable carbon capture and storage technology is still years away, the rules issued today by the EPA have the practical effect of outlawing coal as a fuel source for the next generation of power plants. Alternatively, America's electric cooperatives support an energy policy that maximizes energy efficiency and truly embraces all domestic fuels: nuclear, natural gas, renewable and coal."

"Politicians cannot have it both ways. Our nation can't embrace the concept of energy independence and at the same time turn our backs on America's most abundant domestic fuel source (coal)." ■



More than 250 Youth Day students meet with state senators and representatives in capital city

More than 250 youth from 25 Illinois electric and telephone cooperatives from across the state visited the State Capitol as part of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperative's annual Youth Day, held Wednesday, March 28 in Springfield. Students had the opportunity to have photos taken and meet with their district senators and representatives, hear from Lt. Gov. Sheila Simon and Secretary of State Jesse White and visit the Supreme Court.

In the afternoon, students toured the Old State Capitol and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum before returning to the Prairie Capital Convention Center (PCCC). At the PCCC, students were judged for possible selection as Youth to Washington representatives. Annually, Youth to Washington representatives go on an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. in June. They have the opportunity to visit the monuments, museums, White House and meet their U.S. Congressmen and Senators. ■



More than 250 students from across Illinois crowded into Secretary of State Jesse White's office to hear him speak during the annual Youth Day tour of the Illinois State Capitol.

Organic sunflower seeds for birds, wildlife now available from WIU organic farm

Bird and wildlife enthusiasts can now purchase organic, locally grown sunflower seeds for their feathered and furry backyard friends. The Western Illinois University School of Agriculture's Organic Research Program is selling 9 pound bags of black oilseed sunflower seeds for \$10. The sunflowers were grown on the WIU Allison Organic Research and Demonstration Farm, which is located in Warren County.

According to Joel Gruver, assistant professor and manager of WIU's Allison Farm, the School of Ag's sale of the organic sunflower seeds provides you with an opportunity to take care of local wildlife while also supporting the WIU Organic Research Program.



"Those who purchase seeds will also be eligible to win a prize. Buyers can visit the WIU Organic Program website at www.wiu.edu/ag/organicfarm and enter the number on the label of each bag," Gruver said. Five bags have winning numbers that will entitle the buyer or buyers to a prize."

To place an order, contact the School of Agriculture office from 8 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, at (309) 298-1080 or send an email to

WIU School of Agriculture Research Technician Andy Clayton at AW-Clayton@wiu.edu. Read more about WIU's Organic Research Program at www.wiu.edu/ag/organicfarm/. ■

Prairie Power, Inc. closes Pearl Generation Station

Effective June 1 Prairie Power, Inc. will close the Pearl Generation Station located near Pittsfield. The small 22-mega-watt, coal-fired base load plant went on line in 1968. The plant was only operated when the cost of production was lower than power purchased from the Midwest Independent System Operator (ISO). In 2010, the plant provided 4 percent of PPI's energy requirements.

Superintendent of Generation Randy Fisher said the generation and transmission co-op tried to convert the small plant to a renewable biomass generating facility. The move would have saved several jobs and the plant would have been a good size for demonstrating the feasibility of biomass generation in Illinois. The co-op also owned 1,065 acres of land that could have been used to grow biomass plants, but the land was sold in February. Area farmers could have been employed to grow biomass plants for the generation facility. The plant was already successfully burning a small amount of waste seed corn.



PPI President/CEO Jay Bartlett said, "We wanted to convert it to biomass and it was the perfect size for that project, but it is out of the money." The biomass conversion of the Pearl Plant would have been difficult because of environmental uncertainty with biomass plants and because of the low cost of natural gas. ■



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Time to remodel?

Homeowners weigh improvements against market values

By John Bruce

Americans are staying put. A down economy is driving most people to hunker down in their homes instead of moving, and many wonder whether to finish that attic or replace the front door as they try to out-wait hard times.

Only 10 percent of the general public feels that now is the time to sell their home, according to Fannie Mae's National Housing Survey released in November 2011. The survey shows 75 percent of Americans believe the economy is on the wrong track.

It stands to reason that long-term homeowners want to make their property as livable as possible. How do electric cooperative members get the most bang for their buck in home improvements during a down economy? Which specific home improvements are shown to deliver the most value right now, according to the experts? On the flip side, can a home improvement actually reduce property value?

Exterior home improvements typically deliver the most value for

homeowners. A cost vs. value report from the National Association of Realtors (NAR) ranks exterior improvements among the best home investments on HouseLogic.com, their consumer website. The report "shows the value of putting your home's best façade forward, so to speak," says NAR President Moe Veissi, broker-owner of Veissi & Associates Inc., in Miami. Exterior projects are important to a home's regular upkeep and are expected to recoup far more than many other improvements. Plus, they add instant curb appeal when times are finally right to sell a home.

A home's attractiveness, the indicator of initial appeal, makes a big difference. Exterior elements covering large areas such as siding, entry and garage doors have the greatest visual impact. Updated exteriors give sellers an edge because buyers are attracted to a home before entering.

According to the NAR, seven of the top 10 most cost-effective projects nationally in terms of value recouped are exterior projects. An upscale

fiber-cement siding is judged as the number one improvement value by the NAR, with an estimated 78 percent of costs recouped upon resale.

Two other siding projects ranked in the top 10, including foam-backed vinyl and upscale vinyl. Both are expected to recoup roughly 70 percent of costs. A steel entry door replacement, the least expensive project in the report, averages little more than \$1,200 and is expected to recoup 73 percent of its cost.

Garage door replacement, a wood deck addition, and vinyl window replacement are all expected to recoup around 70 percent of costs, as well.

But good deals aren't limited to the exterior. Conversion of existing space, such as a minor kitchen remodel, turning an attic into a bedroom or finishing a basement, is more likely to bring a better return than an addition.

On the interior, NAR considers attic and kitchen remodeling projects worthwhile investments. The least expensive way to add a bedroom and bathroom within a home's existing

footprint is an attic bedroom, expected to return 72.5 percent of costs. A minor kitchen remodel is expected to return 72 percent of costs.

Least-return improvements are a sunroom addition and a home office remodel, both estimated to recoup less than 46 percent of costs. An in-ground pool can add to a home's value, but there's little chance of recovering the money spent on upkeep, and the NAR advises that an above-ground pool can actually reduce a home's resale value. Many people don't want pools because of the high upkeep.

All homes can benefit from increased insulation and sealing, regardless of climate. Older homes are usually under-insulated compared to new homes.

Adding more can help you realize a return on your investment, and beefing up the R-value (rating for insulation efficiency) in an attic or crawlspace helps cut energy use.

Most homeowners can handle routine maintenance projects and cosmetic touchups, but it's recommended they consult with qualified professionals for larger remodeling jobs and major changes to a home's structure. After deciding on one or more projects, how can a homeowner get started? What to do first on a project can be daunting in itself, so what's the best solution to avoid confusion?

Jerry Fedewa, president of The Greater Lansing (Michigan) Home Builders and Remodelers Association, suggests the priority should be to

stick to the scope of work unless you become aware of additional items that make sense to complete at that time. "It's best to know exactly what you want done and to be able to communicate the scope of the project. If

the builder or remodeler sees additional work that needs to be done they will suggest it."

Fedewa recommends contacting the local home builders and remodelers association for a list of licensed and insured contractors. "I would choose three contractors to visit your project," he advises.

The down economy offers homeowners any opportunities for savings, he relates. "Additions and remodels really did not slow

nearly as much as home building has, so more homebuilders started taking on more additions and remodels. There may be a few more contractors chasing the same amount of work, so there is probably some savings there. Customer service has improved and project time has improved." ■



Insulated siding ranks as one of the top-value home improvements. Available in various earth tones, it provides the strength and thermal benefit of rigid foam insulation with ease of maintenance.

John Bruce is a professional editor and writer who specializes in electric cooperatives. He lives in Monterey, Virginia, and is a member of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative.

Sources: National Association of Realtors, Cost v. Value, Home Improvement, HouseLogic.com

Know what to ask

Asking contractors important questions makes all the difference, according to Roger Weymouth, broker/owner of Weymouth & Associates in Holt, MI, with 20 years of experience in the real estate industry. "Regarding the best questions to ask, I would say, 'as many as you can think of,'" he says. For instance:

- Are you licensed and insured? (Make a copy of the license and insurance)
- Do you carry workman's comp insurance? (Make a copy)
- How long have you been in business?
- Can you provide me a list of the last three projects you did with names and phone numbers of the people that hired you?
- Is this your best price?

Get it in writing

"I personally prefer to pay when the job is complete," Weymouth advises. "Be careful of the contractor that wants money up front. Always make sure your agreement with the contractor is in writing," he adds. "Everything should be written out and understood beforehand."

"It's very important to always include a project completion date in your contract, and what happens if the project isn't finished by that date," Weymouth continues. "For example, include wording such as 'contractor to pay owner x amount each day thereafter completion date if project is not completed.'

Illinois experts recommend quick-fix projects, products

The year 2012 is showing improvement in home sales over 2011, a positive for prospective home sellers. The first two months, according to records provided by the Illinois Association of Realtors (IAR), indicate increased sales of 16.1 percent in January and 25.4 percent in February which included Leap Day. At the time of publication, sales in March had not been released.

While the increase in sales is a positive, the IAR reports that selling prices remain somewhat lower than previous years, down 9.3 percent in January and 8.2 percent in February.

Investing wisely in your home improvement projects can help close up that difference, according to several Co-op Connection Card businesses who offer discounts to members.

Whether for aesthetic reasons or energy efficiency, making improvements can help move the house quicker, which in turn saves the seller money. But spending wisely is the key – so you recoup the greatest amount of your investment.

Becky Kistler, store owner of True Value in Savanna, Ill., believes new windows are the way to go. She says a lot of people at this time of year venture in with tax refunds asking for more energy-efficient windows. Not only do they improve appearance, but they save in heating and cooling costs.

For ease in cleaning and strong energy values, she suggests the Tempco line, saying she has personally experienced the quality

they offer in her own home.

Pam Wheelwright of Hoskins Building Center in Elizabeth believes in the benefits of new windows, too, but doesn't limit her recommendations to that.

"Sometimes it's getting it to sell. A roof is a big one I see," says Wheelwright. While it's a costly improvement, buyers want to move into a new dwelling that is relatively low maintenance.

Another higher end improvement is fiber cement siding. Wheelwright says you want to look at the investment before leaping because it costs nearly twice what vinyl costs. However, depending on the neighborhood, it may be the best choice. For example, putting vinyl on a house surrounded by others sporting fiber cement, will devalue your home. Other selling points for cement siding are its warranties. The brand recommended, known as Maxitile, if ordered with two coats of paint, will have a 25-year warranty on the paint and a 50-year warranty on the product. In short, it won't need replacing.

The ability to choose it in any color also makes it a standout. It comes in any paint or stain color, direct from the factory.

Wheelwright believes strongly in any improvement, including indoor granite, new kitchens and baths.

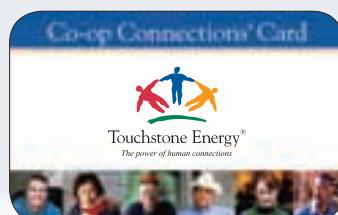
"It's that first impression – that wow factor," she says.

John Jackson of Jackson Concrete and Construction, East Dubuque, is in the remodel business, too. He believes ranch homes from the 70s and 80s particularly, can take attract new buyers with a façade upgrade. He leans toward craftsman style pillars.

"It dresses up the front of the



house," Jackson said. "I think it's better than siding." He suggests building a dormer or covered porch on for a new structural feature and using cedar covered posts, noting that he's done three or four recently. He says customers often opt for brick or stone at the bottom and finish the support with the cedar. They can then be painted white or just clear-coated to maintain their integrity. If 4 x 4 posts already exist, he said using these sturdier pillars can add character.



The businesses quoted in this story have partnered with their local cooperative to offer discounts to members. You can contact them:

- Hoskins Building Center in Elizabeth, Ill.
– 815-858-2444
- True Value in Savanna, Ill.
– 815-273-4304
- Jackson Concrete and Construction, East Dubuque, Ill.
– 815-747-2170

A personal experience

Energy audit better defines cost-saving improvements

By Cindy Ladage

February is the time of year when utility bills seem to be the highest and as you gaze at your energy consumption you begin to think, how can I reduce my bill? The light bulb goes on and the word "energy audit" comes to mind. While this is something I always say I am going to do, this year I decided to follow through and I called Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative, which is my energy provider. Dana Smith came to the rescue and hooked me up with my very own energy audit.

The first question to Dana before finalizing the home energy audit visit was, "What will this cost?" The wonderful answer was "nothing."

Lucky me, I just happened to call at a quiet time of the year and my energy auditor, Jeff Lancaster, came out that very afternoon. Keep in mind that this is highly unusual. There is usually a wait, but on this day my timing was just right.

The first task that Jeff performed on my 1994 two-story was a blower door test. Pulling out equipment from a bag that reminded me of a Ghost Buster episode. He hooked up a plastic sheet at the entry to my garage and turned on a powerful fan that sounded like an airplane taking off. The fan that mounts to the frame of an exterior door is designed to show how much air loss our home was losing. It works by lowering the air pressure inside so the higher outside air pressure flows in through all unsealed cracks and

openings and shows the leaks in the home. It was an eye-opening experience.

The next step was a walk around the house with an infrared camera to do thermographic measures throughout. The camera really caused a flashback to the day my son got a Ghost Buster backpack for Christmas and "blasted" the rest of the family. This camera didn't blast anything, but used surface temperatures to find cold spots in the house. The camera literally "lit up" showing a blue/grey cast for cooler areas.

For years, my family had complained that upstairs was colder/hotter than downstairs and Jeff found the reason why – lack of insulation where our wraparound porch joins the house.

Jeff was brave enough to maneuver around our cluttered basement and check out the airducts, furnace and water heater downstairs. He traveled where no man should go! The end result showed that we need to caulk around our air ducts and should invest in a new energy efficient water heater and water softener. The good news is RECC offers a nice rebate for an electric hot water heater.

RECC did its part and I took the first step to reducing our energy use through a home energy audit. Armed



Jeff Lancaster of Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative performs a blower door test on the home of Cindy Ladage, a member of RECC and a resident of Virden.

with a list of ways to reduce our energy bill, and do my part to reduce our energy burden on the grid, the ball is in now in our park – we just have to take step number two!

You too can utilize energy-audit services offered by your rural electric cooperative. Keep in mind that references to rebates, costs and time frames for getting the audit vary according to the cooperative serving you. ■

Cindy Ladage of Virden is a freelance writer and member of RECC.

Smart moves to save money

To get more ideas and accurate information on energy-saving ideas, go to www.togetherwesave.com. The Energy-Savings Home Tour gives members information on landscaping for efficiency, and interior and exterior home tips to save money on your electric bill.

National Safe Boating Week

Prepare for a season of safe boating

National Safe Boating Week begins May 19. This is a great opportunity to get your boat in order and prepare for a season of safe boating. To ensure a safe summer on the water, there are a variety of safety items that you must legally have on board your watercraft — including life vests, fire extinguishers, a throwable flotation device and properly working lights. However, the list should not end there.

You should also make sure the dock area is safe. This means making sure electrical connections are properly installed and safely maintained. Your loved ones' lives just might depend on it. Even if you are just renting the dock, it is important that you notify the dock owner of any safety violations so they can be fixed immediately. If the owner will not make the corrections or properly maintain the dock, you might strongly consider moving your boat to a dock that will.

Take the story of a 13-year-old Oklahoma boy who died after he jumped from a boat dock into a lake to swim. The dock lights were on at the time. He immediately surfaced and was screaming, then submerged and did not resurface. An adult who entered the water to assist the boy felt an electrical current and called to others to turn off the dock lights. Power company employees inspected the electrical system for the dock lights, and they identified a short in the wiring. The wiring was in contact with the dock's metal frame and transmitted sufficient electrical current into the water to cause a shock. The medical examiner listed the boy's cause of death as drowning, possibly



secondary to electrical shock.

There is also the story of the Ritz family. One summer afternoon their son Lucas went swimming with friends under adult supervision. Their 8-year-old son had been schooled in aquatic safety and was wearing a type II personal flotation device. As Lucas approached the ladder to get onto the dock, he let out a gasp and rolled onto his back unconscious. When his mother jumped into the water to help him, her extremities went numb, and she found it hard to move. She was able to get Lucas to the side of the dock and CPR was administered. However, it was too late. An investigation found that a power boat with a 12-volt wire lying across an AC wire and had gotten hot enough to melt the insulation around the wires. It put a 120-volt charge into the grounding system of the boat, including the engine and propellers. This electrified the surrounding water and lead to Lucas' death.

Wet environments are particularly

dangerous when it comes to electricity. While regulations might vary by location, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that electricity-related drowning can be prevented by regular inspections for ground-fault failure and by strict enforcement of the National Electric Code through frequent inspections of pools and docks.

Safe Electricity urges boat owners to have dockside electrical systems installed by professional electricians guided by National Electric Code and to have these systems inspected regularly to avoid tragedy. Get more information at SafeElectricity.org. ■

Molly Hall is Director of Safe Electricity. E-mail molly-hall@SafeElectricity.org. Safe Electricity is a public awareness program of the Energy Education Council. www.EnergyEdCouncil.org





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A hair-pulling regulation

Robson explains how to cope with pesticide rules

Fortunately, good follicular genes have kept most of the hair on my head, though the forehead has been expanding ever so slightly. And Tammy, my hair cutter, does a wonderful job keeping it short.

I state this fact because if it weren't for the genes and Tammy, my hair would be pulled out by government regulations — and one in particular.

All this is rather funny since, as a pesticide safety specialist with the University of Illinois, I live and breathe with regulations dealing with chemicals applied to control those things that give us so much trouble in the fields, in the yard and indoors.

Some of the regulations can make your head spin, but ultimately there appears to be some logical sense to them, even though many would swear they do not.

And, of course, this leads to a new regulation that may or may not apply to you.

It goes by the initials NPDES - National Pollution Discharge Elimination System. Just reading the description will probably cause you to scratch your head wondering what it means.

NPDES isn't new. Communities with sewage systems and large scale livestock producers have had to deal with it. It's just that the federal courts have decreed it be applied to a new situation.

That ruling is to anyone who applies pesticides "in, on or near water's edge to waters of the United States."

First, "waters of the United States" is water that moves from one spot to another in the simplest terms. In this case, it's water that moves above



ground, or what's called surface water. Ground water is another matter and doesn't apply.

Backyard swimming pools and fish ponds are exempt, since they technically are contained. So are the so-called borrow pits you see along the interstate, where you are looking at a big pit with no overflow pipe.

Farm ponds with an overflow pipe are a prime candidate. So are retention ponds that are built these days to catch water run-off from parking lots. Lakes, rivers and streams are all included as they are waters of the United States.

If you are applying any pesticides to these, such as to control weeds or insects, you need a permit. That's almost black and white and not worthy of much stress.

You won't need a permit if you are applying chemicals to your lawn, garden or farm field. Or will you?

It gets muddier and that's where the hair can turn gray or fall out — when you talk about "near water's edge." This is where ditches and waterways and "close to the edge of a pond" come into play no matter if

you are a homeowner, farmer or businessman.

If there is no water in these areas when applying the chemicals and it doesn't appear there will be any (such as rain) until the chemical has broken down, you don't need to worry.

That's called "Best Professional Judgment" — you follow the forecast, you know the geography and topography of the land, and you know about the chemical you're using.

On the other hand, if you know there's water in the ditch or waterway, or soon will be, and you know it will flow from Point A to some Point B, it wouldn't hurt to get a permit.

Yes, it's paperwork but it's not that difficult. Just give yourself a half hour. On the other hand, it's currently free, and you can apply online.

All of this may be causing your hair to turn or fall out. To help, the Pesticide Safety Education Program has prepared a website with helpful information. You can visit it at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/psep/>. Just creating this FAQ could have induced alcohol poisoning if not for strong genetics again.

If you have a question about this, drop me a line at drobson@illinois.edu.

Also, if you think you need to apply, head over to the IL-EPA website at <http://www.epa.state.il.us/water/permits/pesticide/index.html>. ■

David Robson is Extension Specialist, Pesticide Safety for the University of Illinois.
drobson@illinois.edu



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Tips to cut your utility bills

Heat pump graduation: Class of 2012

The high school proms are in full swing and tassels will be turning soon. You'll probably be fanning yourself with the graduation program as Mother Nature heats up the gymnasium.

As I promised you last month, I have one more heat pump class and I feel confident that you will know more about heat pumps than most folks after reading these columns. Before we begin class, here is a refresher from my previous classes and columns. Remember, a properly-sized and properly-installed heat pump system, including ductwork, will provide affordable comfort. This will be on the test! A PROPERLY SIZED HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEM IS NOT A GUESS. IT MUST BE CALCULATED PROPERLY.

So how do we properly size a heating and cooling system? This brings us to our final lesson, which will be about proper sizing and installation.

The scientific and mathematical step-by-step method commonly used to size a heat pump for a house is called a Manual - J load calculation. A computer with industry-approved software is used. Sizing heating and cooling loads properly is not a terribly difficult process, but it does usually take a few hours. For today's class, we will size the system for a 1,500-square foot, three-bedroom, two-bath house. The dimensions are 30 feet by 50 feet.

Now, I will input the home components required by the computer software. This process derives the total British Thermal Units (BTUs) needed to heat and cool this house. Here are some of the key components for our house:

1. **Home location:** a. city - Little Rock b. state - Arkansas
2. **Design temperature for your geographical location:** a. summer - 100 degrees b. winter - 21 degrees
3. **Your desired thermostat setting:** a. heating - 74 degrees b. cooling - 71 degrees

Now, we input the actual construction features that relate to the heating and cooling one room at a time. Let's start with the master bedroom. It measures 14 feet by 16 feet and forms a corner with 14 feet of north facing wall and 16 feet of west facing wall.

4. **Exposed wall** - 30 feet
5. **Room dimensions** - 14 feet by 16 feet
6. **Ceiling height** - 9 feet
7. **Wall type** - 4 inch wood studs with R = 11 cellulose insulation and brick veneer
8. **Windows** - Double-glazed, low-e, argon gas, vinyl, 30 square feet oriented north and 15 square feet oriented west
9. **Exterior doors** - None in this room
10. **Ceiling insulation** - R = 44, blown cellulose
11. **Floor insulation** - R = 11, enclosed crawlspace
12. **Air infiltration** - No fireplace and average construction

Based upon this information, our software indicates this room needs 3,550 BTUs of heating and 2,873 BTUs of cooling. Now we'll input the data from each room and derive a total for the entire dwelling.

Now our software indicates the entire house requires 21,229 BTUs of heat for a designed load of 21 degrees during the winter. Our house

requires 21,015 BTUs of cooling for a designed load of 100 degrees during the summer. The heating and cooling BTU requirements are almost the same number, which makes this home a perfect heat pump application.

So, a two-ton (24,000 BTU) properly installed heat pump would be perfect for this particular house. However, I know from experience that many HVAC dealers simply guess at the required system and suggest a much larger system. A larger system will cost more to purchase and more to operate. For instance, a three-ton geothermal heat pump will cost about \$6,000 more than a two-ton system. This important calculation process is just one of the many ways the electric cooperatives and I help families achieve comfortable homes and manageable utility bills.

We'll close with proper installation. It's imperative that the HVAC installer size the ductwork to deliver the required BTUs to each room. The ductwork should be rigid pipe and properly sealed. I suggest that you always ask to see the load requirement calculations before agreeing to purchase a new heating and cooling system. Be sure to ask for a few references from the company. Follow these suggestions and you will have affordable comfort year round. ■

Doug Rye can be heard on several different Illinois radio stations. You can go to Doug Rye's Web site at www.douglyre.com, e-mail him at info@philliprye.com, or call 501-653-7931.



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Clean coils mean higher efficiency

In addition to regular maintenance by a professional, keeping your air-conditioning unit free of debris and dirt can help keep it running efficiently.

It is wise to make sure your existing central air conditioner is running as efficiently as possible to reduce your electric bills. And the way this summer started your air conditioner may get a real workout. It might even be time to consider a new heat pump or air conditioner.

The easiest way to determine the savings from installing a new central air conditioner is to compare the SEER (seasonal energy efficiency ratio) of your existing model to that of a new model. You can be pretty sure your existing unit is not operating more efficiently than when it was brand new, so the savings from this comparison will be on the conservative side.

There are some things you can do yourself to keep your existing central air conditioner running as efficiently as possible. This does not preclude having regular professional service calls, though. Technicians have special equipment and pressure gauges to check the internal components of the system, which is impossible for a homeowner to do on his or her own. Regular service calls can also extend the life of a central air conditioner.

It helps to have an understanding of how an air conditioner works. It operates on a delicate balance of air flow rates over the indoor and outdoor coils and proper pressures of the refrigerant. The compressor compresses the refrigerant to make it very hot. This



Remove garden tools and other items from around the central air conditioner condenser unit so the air flow is not restricted.

hot liquid is hotter than the outdoor air, so it loses heat to the outdoor air through the condenser coils.

The cooler refrigerant then goes through an evaporator, which makes it very cold. This is similar to how your skin cools off when perspiration evaporates. This cold refrigerant flows through the indoor coil. The blower moves indoor air over these cold coils, which cools your house air. At the same time, water condenses on the cold coils so the indoor air is both cooled and dehumidified.

As you can see, getting adequate air flow through the outdoor condenser coils is important for efficiency so the

refrigerant will be colder when it gets indoors. It can really help efficiency to make sure weeds and shrubs have not grown too close to the outdoor unit and impede air flow. Also, don't rest rakes or other items against it which may block air flow.

Switch off the circuit breaker to the unit and remove the outdoor cabinet. Clean out any debris that has accumulated inside it, which may block the coils. You don't have to make it spotless, though. If fins have been bent over in spots, try to straighten them out enough so more air gets through.

It is important that all the screws holding the cabinet sections together

Photos by James Dulley



Clean leaves and other debris from the top of the central air conditioner or heat pump, even though many will blow away by themselves when the unit starts.

are tight when you reinstall the cabinet. Even if it is clean and you do not remove the cabinet, check all the screws. If they are loose, leaks will draw air in gaps instead of through the coils as designed.

Just as the proper amount of air flow is important through the outdoor coils, it is also important through the indoor coils. With the circuit breaker still switched off, remove the side cover on the indoor unit to expose the evaporator coils and the blower. When you reinstall the cover, make sure to tighten the screws.

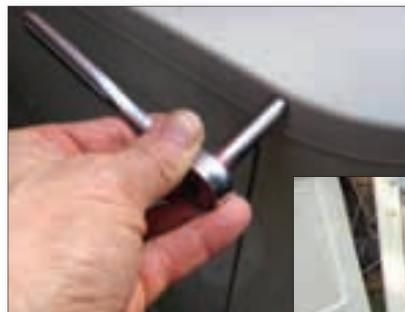
Quite a bit of dirt can accumulate on the indoor coils, blocking air flow and insulating them from the air. This is because the coils get damp when the air conditioner is running and dirt sticks to it. Wipe the coils and then use the brush attachment on your vacuum cleaner to clean them and the blower as well as possible.

Even though everyone has heard to change the blower filter regularly, most people don't do it. At the beginning of the cooling season, change the filter whether you think it is dirty or not. A dirty filter increases air flow resistance, which reduces efficiency. Check the joints in the ducts for any air leaks. Seal them with aluminum tape or black Gorilla duct tape.

Send inquiries to James Dulley,
Illinois Country Living, 6906
Royalgreen Drive, Cincinnati, OH
45244 or visit www.dulley.com.



◀ Pull the handle from the secondary power switch to the outdoor condenser unit to be certain the electricity is off.



◀ Make sure all the screws, which hold the housing panels on the outdoor unit, are tight so there is minimal air leakage.



After the electric power is switched off to the unit, remove a side cover and clean out debris.



◀ Remove the side cover from the indoor air handler unit and clean off the evaporator coils (a heat pump is shown).

Finest Cooking

Chicken Enchilada Bake



Chicken Enchilada Bake (above)

8-10 medium flour tortilla shells
4 chicken breasts, shredded or a rotisserie chicken, shredded
1 (15-oz.) can chicken broth
2 (14-oz.) cans cream of chicken soup

Place chicken, cheese, onions and olives on tortilla shells. Roll up each shell and place in a 9x13-inch baking pan. Heat soup and broth together in a saucepan. Stir until well blended. Pour over tortilla shells. Bake at 350 degrees for 20-30 minutes. About half way through baking time, sprinkle remaining cheese on top and allow to melt. Serve as is, or with a dollop of sour cream.

1 pkg. Mexican blend shredded cheese, divided
1 sm. can sliced black olives, opt.
Chopped green onion, opt.
Sour cream, opt.

Jalapeño Chicken Dip (below)

3-4 chicken breasts, seasoned, cooked and shredded
3 (8-oz.) pkgs. cream cheese, softened

3 cans cream of chicken soup
1 (12-oz.) jar Jalapeños, undrained

Mix together all ingredients into a saucepan until cheese is melted. Transfer to a crock pot and keep on warm. Serve with tortilla chips or corn chips.

Jalapeño Chicken Dip



Just Divine

Who: St. John Vianney Women's Society in Sherman

Cost: \$15, including shipping

Details: soft-backed, comb-bound

Pages of recipes: 180

Send checks to: Janet Kalb,
121 Crown Point, Sherman, IL 62684
or call 217-741-7129

Pineapple Cookies

2 C. sifted flour
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
1/2 C. soft butter
1 C. granulated sugar
1 egg
1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 C. chopped pineapple, drained
1/4 tsp. nutmeg
1 T. granulated sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Mix butter, sugar and egg together until creamy. Add dry ingredients to wet ingredients and mix. Mix in pineapple. Drop by teaspoons on an ungreased cookie sheet. Mix nutmeg and sugar together and sprinkle on top of each cookie. Bake for 10 minutes, or until golden brown.

Pasta Diablo

2 tsp. extra virgin olive oil
1 onion, chopped
1-2 T. minced garlic
2 (15-oz.) cans diced tomatoes
1 (16-oz.) can tomato sauce
2 T. dry red wine
1/2 tsp. sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4-1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
1/4 C. chopped parsley
1/2 lb. thin spaghetti

In a large nonstick sauce pan, swirl the olive oil evenly in the pan and heat over medium heat. Add onion and garlic, stirring frequently until golden, about 8 minutes. Add tomatoes, tomato sauce, wine, sugar, salt and red pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered, until the flavors are blended and the sauce is slightly thickened, about 20 minutes. Stir in parsley. Meanwhile, cook the spaghetti according to directions. Drain and divide into 4 servings. Spoon sauce over noodles.

Recipes From The Heart

Who: ETC Club of Mason City

Cost: \$13 including shipping

Details: soft-backed, comb-bound

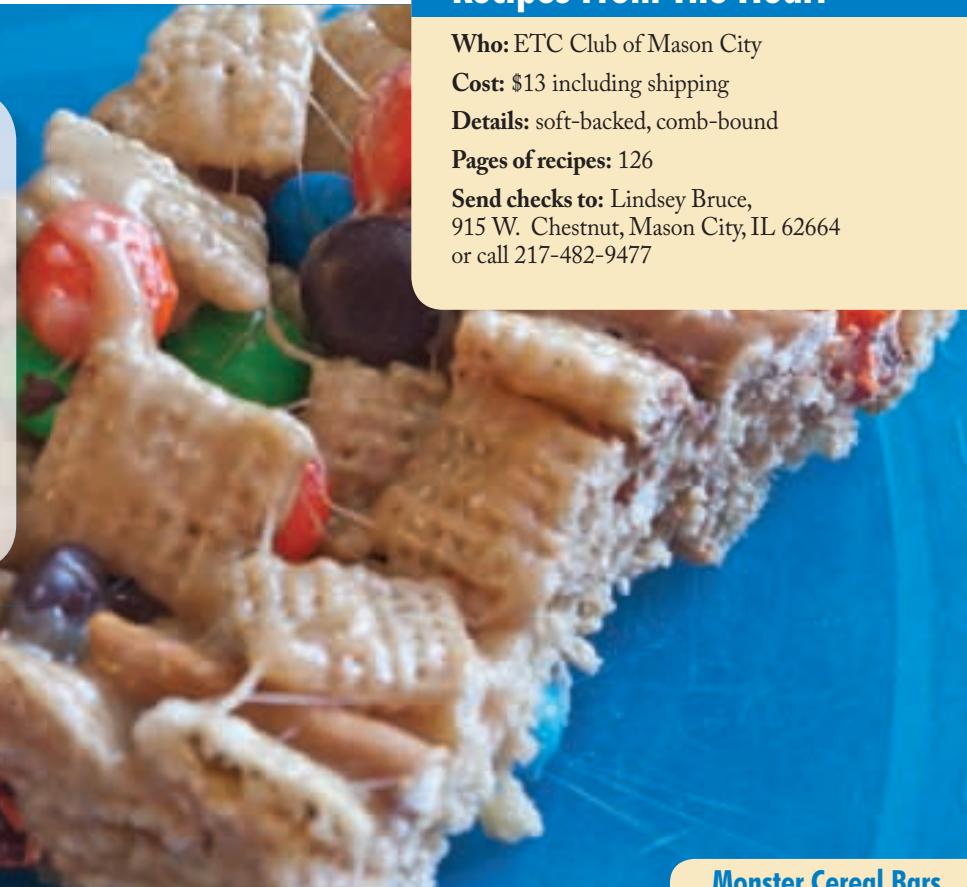
Pages of recipes: 126

Send checks to: Lindsey Bruce,
915 W. Chestnut, Mason City, IL 62664
or call 217-482-9477

Monster Cereal Bars

1 stick butter
1 (10-oz) bag marshmallows
1/3 C. peanut butter
5 C. Rice Chex Cereal
1 C. broken pretzel sticks
1 C. M&Ms

Melt butter and marshmallows in a saucepan over medium-low heat. Add peanut butter and stir until incorporated. Remove from heat. Add cereal, pretzels and M&Ms. Place in a slightly greased 9x13-inch pan. Cut into squares once cooled.



Monster Cereal Bars

Pineapple Pretzel Fluff

1 C. coarsely crushed pretzels
1/2 C. butter, melted
1 C. sugar, divided
1 (8-oz) pkg. cream cheese
1 (20-oz.) can crushed pineapple,
drained
1 (12-oz.) ctn. frozen whipped
topping, thawed

In a bowl, combine pretzels, butter and 1/2 of the sugar. Press into a 9x13-inch baking pan. Bake at 400 degrees for 7 minutes. Cool. Meanwhile, in a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and remaining sugar until creamy. Fold in pineapple and whipped topping. Chill. Before serving, break pretzel mixture into small pieces; stir into pineapple mixture.

Creamy Cajun Chicken Pasta

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts,
cut into thin strips
8-oz linguine, cooked al dente
4 tsp Cajun seasoning
4 T. butter
2 thinly sliced green onions
2 C. cream
4 T. chopped sun-dried tomatoes
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. dried basil
1/4 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 C. grated Parmesan

Place chicken and Cajun seasonings in a bowl and toss to coat. In a large skillet, over medium heat, saute chicken in butter until chicken is tender, about 5-7 minutes. Reduce heat and add green onion, heavy cream, tomatoes, basil, salt, garlic powder, and black pepper and heat through. Pour over hot linguine and toss with Parmesan cheese. If sauce is too thick, add a little more cream to desired consistency.

Chicken Salad Cups

1 pkg. refrigerated pie pastry
2 C. diced, cooked chicken
1 can unsweetened, crushed
pineapple, drained
1/2 C. slivered almonds
1/2 C. chopped celery
1/2 C. shredded Cheddar cheese
1/2 C. mayonnaise
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. paprika

Topping:

1/2 C. sour cream
1/4 C. mayonnaise
1/2 C. Cheddar cheese

Cut each sheet of pie pastry into 14 1/2-inch rounds; re-roll scraps and cut out additional circles. Press pastry onto the bottom and up the sides of 14 ungreased muffin cups. Bake at 450 degrees for 6-7 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on wire rack. In a bowl, combine the chicken, pineapple, almonds, celery, cheese, mayonnaise, salt and paprika; refrigerate until chilled. Just before serving, spoon two rounded T. of chicken salad into each pastry cup. Combine sour cream and mayonnaise; spoon over filling. Sprinkle with cheese.

Visit www.icl.coop to see
an archive of past
Illinois Country Living recipes.

Photos by Catrina McCulley Wagner

Telemedicine

The new pulse of rural health care

Right now, the state of Illinois is in the midst of developing its broadband infrastructure. And, there are so many interested parties out there, either keeping a watchful eye on the development, or actively taking a role in shaping the future of Illinois broadband that the situation can become very convoluted.

Still, if you were to ask, most would agree that aside from the actual network infrastructure itself, one of the biggest needs lies with educating citizens on the use of high-speed broadband services. To that end, this month I will focus on the rural medical community's use of broadband services.

Broadband allows patients in rural areas to access urban networks of specialists and experts. Charlene Shallow, Nurse Practitioner from Prairie Cardiovascular Consultants says, "Technology has assisted us in our ability to significantly impact the care that we provide in rural areas in many ways. In cardiology we are now able to read a number of tests that are done in outlying facilities."

Just think of that! During an emergency, rather than waiting to be rushed to a specialist who may be many miles away, patients can now have their tests sent ahead of them. The time saved can mean the difference between life and death. And, there are so many more potential applications.

The American Medical Association (AMA) comes down heavily in favor of broadband use in mobile health as a new frontier in health innovation. By employing broadband technology, physicians download diagnostic data, lab results, images and drug information to handheld devices like PDAs and smartphones. Emergency medical responders use field laptops to keep track of patient information and records. Patients use health monitoring devices and sensors that accompany them everywhere. These aren't plans for the future. These types

of applications are happening now.

"In Cardiology we also have the ability to do ECG analysis from the ambulance. This can save precious time. Now if a patient activates 911, the ambulance arrives, does an ECG and remotely sends it to the physician for an instant read. If it appears they are having a heart attack, they are diverted to the city instead of going to their local facility. In a heart emer-

and clinics. In certain settings, they cost on average 20 percent less than on-site solutions, reduce the need for internal IT expertise and provide timely updates to clinical decision-support tools. The e-prescribing component of EHRs helps avert known drug allergic reactions and potentially dangerous drug interactions.

And of course, with broadband extended services available not only at the doctor's office, but also in the patient's home, even more applications become possible in the realm of remote patient monitoring. This enables early detection of health problems, usually before the onset of noticeable symptoms.

"We have patients who have special pacemakers and for them we now have a baby monitor type device that sits beside the bed and downloads information, alerting us to subtle changes that could indicate potential future problems," says Shallow. Earlier detection allows earlier treatment and, therefore, better outcomes.

For example, after an initial hospitalization for heart failure, 60 percent of patients are readmitted at least once within six to nine months.

Keep in mind that all of these solutions are in their infancy. If you were to compare all of the applications available just a few years ago to what is available today, the differences would be amazing. And, where we're going is going to be even more fantastic.



Tools like the Philips wireless monitoring devices allow doctors and patients to keep in touch remotely.

gency saving precious minutes can make all the difference because 'time is muscle' when you are having a heart attack," says Shallow.

And there is a huge cost savings inherent in utilizing broadband services as well. According to one study often cited by the AMA, electronic health record systems have the potential to generate net savings of \$371 billion for hospitals and \$142 billion for physician practices from safety and efficiency gains over 15 years. Potential savings from preventing disease and better managing chronic conditions could double these estimates.

Hosted Electronic Health Record (EHR) solutions tend to be more affordable and easier-to-manage alternatives for small physician practices

**Ed VanHoose is the
Digital Communications
Administrator/IT Manager
for the Association
of Illinois Electric
Cooperatives in Springfield.**



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- 4) Mail to: Illinois Marketplace, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708, by deadline. Deadlines: July issue – May 21; August issue – June 20.

We reserve the right to reject any advertisement. Ads postmarked after the deadline will be placed in the next available issue.

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While Farm Credit Services is acknowledging 2012 as International Year of the Cooperative, like other cooperatives, it considers every year to be something to celebrate.

Farm Credit Services of Illinois is a farmer-owned and farmer-directed cooperative that serves more than 8,200 farm families, rural landowners and agribusinesses with competitive flexible financing and crop insurance risk management expertise. Created by the U.S. Congress in 1916 to insure farmers and rural America have access to a dependable source of financial capital, Farm Credit is still committed to the mission today. Although the Farm Credit System is a Government Sponsored Enterprise (G.S.E.), Farm Credit Services is completely self-sustaining and operates without any financial support from the federal government.

In Illinois alone, the support and use

of FCS shows phenomenal numbers. In 2011, FCS granted 18,800 loans for a total of \$3.045 billion. Of that, \$700 million went to operating and machinery loans while \$2.344 billion was allocated for real estate loans. There are 19 office locations throughout the state to serve the needs of participating farmers.

While it's easy for Farm Credit to take for granted how distinctly unique it is, David Owens, President and Chief Executive Officer for FCS in Illinois, says the Wall Street crowd, which typically works with corporations, might find it peculiar.

Corporate America, he says, often looks at the financial interests of "owners" and "customers" as being in conflict. In cooperatives, the owners and the customers are one in the same. Some investors are especially puzzled to learn that the boards of directors throughout Farm Credit are mostly comprised of farmers who are active Farm Credit borrowers. It is almost inconceivable to

them, he says, that Farm Credit's priority is to maximize the customer's value – not maximize profit.

He succinctly explained one of the largest benefits inherent in the cooperative model.

"Since co-ops are formed for a specific purpose, they are focused on the group of goods and services they provide. This focus leads to the "best in industry" specialization and specific expertise. No other business is as focused and no other business will possess the same level of operational knowledge and business intelligence for their industry as a cooperative," Owens says.

To learn more about Farm Credit Services of Illinois, check out its website: www.fcsillinois.com



In celebrating the International Year of the Cooperative, we want to show our support for the cooperative model. Please join us each month as we continue to feature a different cooperative that you may recognize or might also be a member.

Curbng copper theft

Attractive target can be costly and deadly

By Maurice Martin, Cooperative Research Network

Look at a piece of copper and you can see why it's been popular with artists for 10,000 years. Its reddish-orange luster enhances jewelry and other decorative art. Ancient weapon makers also found it useful — axes with copper heads date back at least 5,000 years. More recently, engineers discovered that copper was an excellent conductor of electrical current.

In the past few years, copper's popularity has seen an uptick among another group: criminals. Whether it's the tough economy or methamphetamine users needing money to pay for their next fix, the relatively high price of the metal has led to a wave of copper theft. The Electric Safety Foundation International (ESFI) estimates that there are more than 50,000 copper thefts from electrical utilities each year.

Substation Grounding

Copper is swiped from many places, including construction sites, warehouses and abandoned homes. In some areas, crooks drag away entire air-conditioning units so that they can remove the copper tubing at their leisure.

But copper theft from utility poles and substations carries a particular concern. Copper energizes current-carrying conductors (wires) as well as playing a key role in grounding.

Substations — which contain expensive equipment for controlling the flow of electricity from high-voltage transmission lines to your home — must be grounded to the earth to prevent damage from lightning strikes and fault currents. When your co-op grounds equipment in a substation, it makes an electrical connection to a buried network of wires, called a ground grid, that dissipates the excess charge safely over a wide area.

But burying wires causes them to corrode.

"Buried aluminum undergoes galvanic corrosion and can turn to dust in two years," explains Emory Barber, Director of Cable and Systems Engineering at Southwire Company, one of the nation's largest manufacturer of transmission lines. "Given the same conditions, copper can last 60 years or more."

Despite the extreme danger that comes with entering a substation, the copper wire inside makes for an attractive target — all a thief has to do is make a couple of cuts and get out. For the relatively small value of the stolen copper, crooks leave a mess that can be very expensive to clean up.

ESFI estimates the value of copper stolen from utilities each year — whether grounding wire substations, grounding wires off poles, or even power lines themselves — to be about \$20 million. But the financial impact can run three times that amount. And when copper bandits strike, not-for-profit co-ops have no choice but to pass the replacement costs on to their members.

A substation or pole that's left ungrounded becomes a dangerous place. Sometimes the thieves touch or cut the wrong



As the economy continues to remain shaky, and the price of scrap metal shoots up, copper has become a target for theft from electrical substations, which creates expensive clean-up for co-ops and a potentially fatal risk for thieves.

conductors, exposing themselves to lethally high voltages. Errant currents can damage electrical equipment, taking the substation or line "down" and interrupting power to consumers. The electricity can even endanger co-op employees, causing injury or death. ESFI estimates about 35 Americans die each year because of copper or other metal theft.

Foilng Thieves

Southwire has addressed copper theft with a cable it calls Proof Positive. This product comes etched with a unique identifying code, serial number, and a website address that scrap dealers can visit to see if the copper has been heisted. "The Proof Positive system enables recyclers to identify the material as stolen and alert law enforcement, often resulting in an arrest and conviction," says Charles Holcombe, senior product development engineer with Southwire.

To prevent theft before it happens, co-ops have embarked on multi-pronged initiatives. Many have launched intensive public relations campaigns about the issue; others have partnered with local Crime Solvers chapters and posted rewards. Some co-ops are replacing much of the purloined wire with copper-clad steel. Copper-clad steel, which has been around since 1915, boasts the electricity-carrying properties of copper but contains very little scrap value. Although bendable, it can't be cut and removed with normal tools — even hydraulic bolt cutters.

Also, keep in mind that no one should be in an electric co-op substation except trained employees. Report any suspicious activity to local law enforcement and your electric cooperative. Your diligence can help stop criminals and may even save a life.

Maurice Martin is a senior program manager for the Cooperative Research Network, a service of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



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2 Craft Show, Round House Center, Inc., Beardstown. 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. 217-323-5242.

2-3 7th Annual Rochelle Railroad Days. Rochelle. www.rochellerrailroadpark.org

7-10 Superman Celebration. Metropolis. Contests, food, comic book and artist show. 618-524-2714.



Collinsville has more than a bite of world's supply of horseradish

You can dip into the horseradish, **June 1-3** when Collinsville hosts its International Horseradish Festival. Started in 1988, the community has supported this annual event which features its main crop. The area is known for producing 60 percent of the world's supply of this ingredient. Combined with the rest of southern Illinois, that percentage tops out at 80- to 85-percent.

Festival visitors will have their pick from food vendors who serve up everything from deep fried horseradish pickles to staples such as pot roast horseradish sandwiches and spiced up chicken and shrimp. Check out www.horseradishfestival.net for a more complete schedule.

9 Craft and Collector's Caravan.

Pickneyville at the Square. 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Crafts, antiques, collectibles and silent auction in McDaniel Furniture building at noon. 618-357-3243.

To be considered for inclusion, please submit events in the format used above. Preference is given to events sponsored by non-profit entities. Submitting an event is not a guarantee of publication. Photos are welcome, but will not be returned unless a self-addressed and stamped envelope is provided. Events are subject to change, so please contact the event sponsor for confirmation.

Deadline: May 15 for August events. **Mail to:** Illinois Datebook, PO Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. E-mail to: datebook@aicelcoop.com.



Pictured with Jim and Della Niemann, on the right, are The Chosen Ones, taken at a previous engagement on the Niemann farm.

Jim Niemann, a Director of MJM Electric Co-op, and his wife Della, will host their sixth annual "Gospel Concert on the Farm" beginning at 5:30 p.m., Saturday, **June 9** at their farm in Litchfield. Featured this year are The Chosen Ones, a gospel group from Manchester, Ill. The Niemann family, including Jim on washtub base and Della on a guitar harp, will open the evening.

In addition to music, Jim's 35-piece collection of Allis Chalmers tractors and equipment will be displayed around the farm. Home-made ice cream and kettle corn will be available. The event is open to the public, rain or shine. Attendees are asked to bring their own lawn chairs.

Directions: The Niemann farm is located four miles south of downtown Litchfield on State St./Niemann Trail, then turn east on 8th Ave., first house.

9 Annual Galena Territory Garage Sale at the Territory Marina Pavilion at Lake Galena. 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Private home garage sales, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Maps at Pavilion. 815-281-0594 or 815-777-4825.

9 44th Annual Old Market Day – Skills from the Hills, Galena. Outdoor market at Old Market House Historic Site, 123 North Commerce Street. 815-858-3392.

9-10 Utica Garden Faire and Plant Sale, Utica. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday. 815-667-4856 or www.uticagardenclub.org

10 Home & Garden Tour. Alton and Godfrey. Noon to 4 p.m. 618-467-23675 or www.prideincorporated.org

15-17 Great Galena Balloon Race, Eagle Ride Resort & Spa, Galena. More than 20 hot air balloons, car show, live music. 800-892-2269.

16-24 Annual Fields Project Fine Arts Festival, Mix Park, Oregon. Local and national artists show their work on festival day. 815-734-6075 or www.fieldsproject.com

19-24 Annual Midsommar Swedish Days Festival, Geneva. 630-232-6060 or www.genevachamber.com/festivals.html

20 "Treasures of the Mississippi," Mark Wagner, Education Director, National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium at the Windmill Cultural Center, Fulton. 6 p.m. 815-589-3160.

23 Garden Tractor Pull, Antique Tractor Show, Round House Center, Beardstown. Weigh-in at 9 a.m.; pulls at 10 a.m. 217-323-5242.

24-30 Ford County Fair, Melvin. Entertainment for the whole family. 217-379-2920 or www.fordcountypfair.org

29-30 Star-Spangled Shenandoah Pro Rodeo and Fireworks. Shenandoah Riding Center, Galena. Fireworks after show. 815-648-1971.

29- July 1 175th Anniversary Celebration, Sainte Marie. Entertainment, huge parade. 618-455-3173 or www.saintemarie175.com

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ON ALL HAND TOOLS!

FACTORY DIRECT TO YOU!

How does Harbor Freight Tools sell high quality tools at such ridiculously low prices? We buy direct from the factories who also supply the major brands and sell direct to you. It's just that simple! See for yourself at one of our 380 Stores Nationwide and use this 20% Off Coupon on one of our 7,000 products*, plus pick up a Free 9 LED Aluminum Flashlight, a \$6.99 value. We stock Shop Equipment, Hand Tools, Tarps, Compressors, Air & Power Tools, Woodworking Tools, Welders, Tool Boxes, Generators, and much more.

- Over 20 Million Satisfied Customers!
- 1 Year Competitor's Low Price Guarantee
- No Hassle Return Policy!
- 100% Satisfaction Guaranteed!

Nobody Beats Our Quality,
Service and Price!

29 PIECE TITANIUM NITRIDE COATED DRILL BIT SET

LOT NO.
5889

drillmaster®

**SAVE
60%** **\$9.99** REG. PRICE
\$24.99



HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 6
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LOT NO. 93068

WIRELESS DRIVEWAY ALERT SYSTEM

Bunker Hill Security®

**SAVE
53%**

\$13.99 REG. PRICE
\$29.99

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 4

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CENTRALPNEUMATIC 3 GALLON, 100 PSI OILLESS PANCAKE AIR COMPRESSOR

LOT NO. 95275

**SAVE
50%**

\$39.99 REG. PRICE \$79.99

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 5

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SUPER
COUPON!



FREE!
WITH MINIMUM PURCHASE OF \$9.99

**3-1/2" SUPER BRIGHT
NINE LED ALUMINUM
FLASHLIGHT**
ITEM 65020/69052/69111
REG. PRICE \$6.99

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 1
Free item only available with qualifying minimum purchase (excluding price of free gift item). Cannot be used with any other discount or coupon. Coupon not valid on prior purchases. Offer good while supplies last. Shipping & Handling charges may apply if item must be picked up in-store. Coupon cannot be bought, sold, or transferred. Original coupon must be presented in-store, or with your order form, or entered online in order to receive the offer. Valid through 8/30/12. Limit one coupon per customer and one coupon per day.

Item 65020
shown



SUPER
COUPON!



**PITTSBURGH 12" RATCHET
BAR CLAMP/SPREADER**
LOT NO. 46807/
68975/69221

\$1.99
REG. PRICE \$5.49

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 3

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SUPER
COUPON!



**CEN-TECH AUTOMATIC
BATTERY FLOAT
CHARGER**
LOT NO. 42292/69594

\$5.49
REG. PRICE \$12.99

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 8

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**20%
OFF**
ANY
SIMPLE
ITEM!

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**20%
OFF**
ANY
SIMPLE
ITEM!

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 1
Use this coupon to save 20% on any one single item purchased when you shop at a Harbor Freight Tools store. Cannot be used with any other discount or coupon. Coupon not valid on any of the following: gift cards, Inside Track Club membership, extended service plans, Compressors, Generators, Tool Cabinets, Tool Carts, Welders, Floor Jacks, Campbell Hausfeld products, open box items, damaged items, or items with manufacturer's warranties. Not valid on sale items, special offers, or promotional items, or orders or online orders. Coupon not valid on prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase date with original receipt. Coupon cannot be bought, sold, or transferred. Original coupon must be presented in-store in order to receive the offer. Valid through 8/30/12. Limit one coupon per customer and one coupon per day.



**5 FT. 6" x 7 FT. 6"
ALL PURPOSE WEATHER
RESISTANT TARP**
LOT NO. 953/69136/69248



\$2.49
REG. PRICE \$3.99

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 8

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COUPON!



**MOVER'S
DOLLY**
LOT NO.
93888

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 7

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HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 7

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HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 8

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HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 5

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HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 5

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HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 5

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