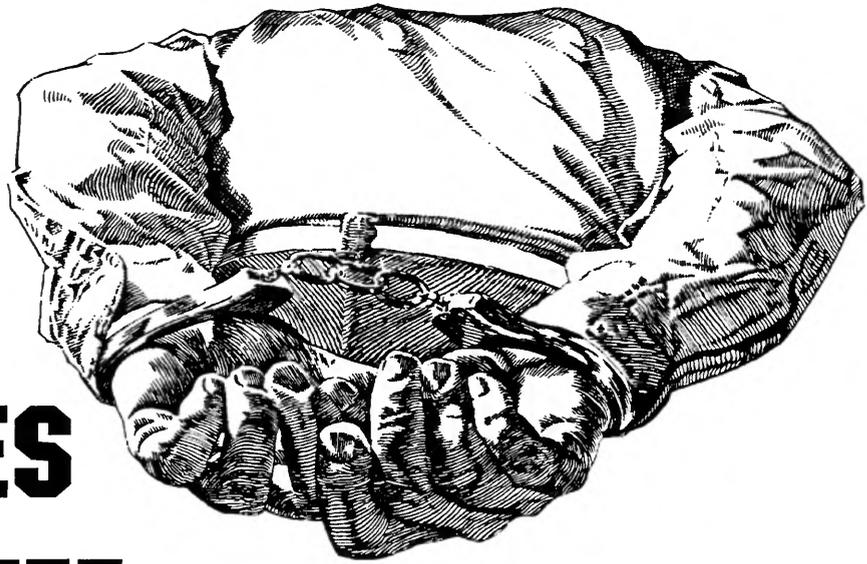


IT TAKES A THIEF...



to tamper with meters!

Tampering with an electric meter is illegal. And, it can be quite dangerous because of the possible exposure to high voltage.

When a person steals electricity, the thief is stealing from neighbors and fellow cooperative members who ultimately pay for the stolen power. Theft of electricity is also a violation of Illinois state law. . .with all the penalties that go with conviction.

Seals on meters are like locks on doors, discouraging unauthorized entry. If your meter needs attention, please contact your cooperative's office.



Electric Cooperatives of Illinois



Rural Highlights

Board of Directors: Jim Ayers, John Beatty, Ted Dowson, R. Steven Gage, Curtis Hays, Lee Marten, Melvin Repscher, David White, and Lyle Yeaman.
Manager: Del L. England

RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

217-738-6197

AUBURN, ILLINOIS

New Year's resolutions!

We all take advantage of the new year to turn over a new leaf and right any shortcomings of the previous year. RECC is no exception: We are not perfect but our desire to be the best member-owned cooperative in Illinois cannot be questioned.

RECC has tried to determine what you, the members, wish us to do, that is within our ability.

We would lower the electric rates more than they were in 1995? Oh? Did you miss that? For the first time in a long time there was a small rate decrease in the last rate tier of the electric heat rate. It was not a big drop, and the electric heat rate is not the biggest rate category, but we did what we could with what we had. It's a small step in the direction we hope to continue going. How did Neil Armstrong say it when he set foot on the moon? "One small step for RECC and one giant step for RECC members?" Anyway it was something like that.

We have hung our hat on service reliability, and rightly so, because without service reliability you have nothing. A member once said that for a lower rate he could stand being out of service for a few hours a year. Sounds O.K. at first, but who is going to pay for the upgrade after the years of neglect?

Sounds like the guy who wouldn't pay for a new roof and ended up paying for a new roof, ceiling and floor a few years later. Maintenance is crucial year in and year out, and neglect will only result in larger expenses later. RECC will continue to maintain the lines and the system for service reliability.

A small expenditure today in exchange for a rate decrease that would not be visible to everyone and assured higher expenses in the future is short-sighted planning.

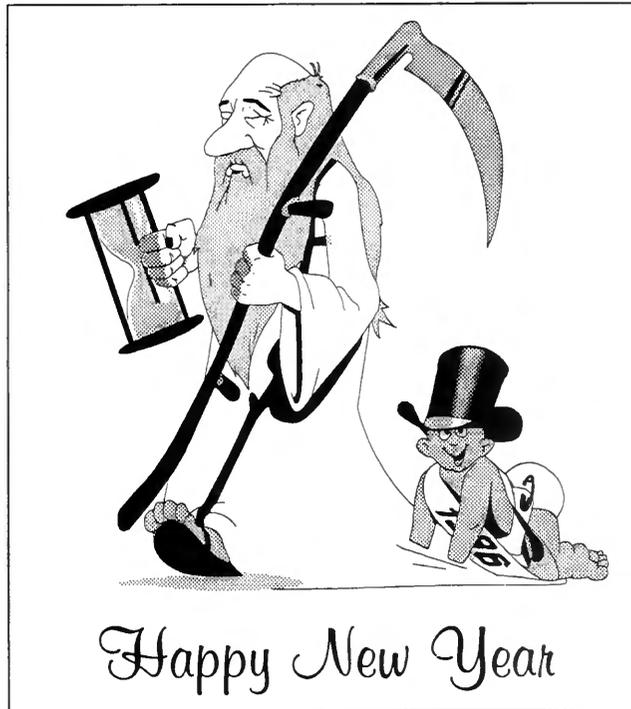
One area that RECC has worked very hard on is its Member Service. We've just completed a full membership survey, and we now know who our

members are and what they expect from us. We offer a number of programs and services that few other cooperatives or utilities can match. These programs and services have been mentioned in the Rural HiLights over the years and are listed in a brochure titled, "Build, Building or Rebuild." Other member contacts involving communities in the service area and participation in community events will continue to be made. We invite members to ask RECC to become involved so that we may all grow together in the region.

So what resolutions does RECC have for

1996? We've lost weight to the point that we are a lean machine. Our good deed is covered by the services and programs we have available and our willingness to try to help in any situation. Saving money is an everyday job at RECC. We try not to waste time, material or electric power. We will always try to be courteous and helpful to the point that one member is not favored over another.

These resolutions are what RECC tries to live up to every day for you the member. Sometimes we may fall short, but our effort will always be 100 percent.



RECC again is promoting Illinois Youth Day and the Youth to Washington tour program. Illinois Youth Day is recognized as the experience of a lifetime for a high school junior who is interested in state government.

During that day, students tour the State Capitol complex, meet their local legislators, hear speakers discuss important current issues, and meet other students from across Illinois.

The Youth to Washington tour has been nationally recognized as the best student tour to the nation's capital. During this well chaperoned trip, the students are encouraged to work on projects together, they have an opportunity to meet their legislators, and they tour many of the historic sites of Washington.

All expenses for transportation, meals, lodging and admission are paid by the co-op. The students

furnish their personal money.

Many who have gone on the tour in the past are now prominent business people, and some are legislators.

Rules and applications are being sent to all area schools. Ask your principal or counselor if they have seen their participation form.

Generally, the rules are that two 11th grade students from each school may attend Illinois Youth Day, and the schools determine who they will be. Two students from RECC's Youth Day group will be chosen to go on the Youth to Washington tour, along with other student representatives from Illinois. Those who hope to go on the Washington trip will need to fill out an application form. They will also be interviewed by judges chosen by the co-op.

Please contact the co-op office if you have any questions.

Geothermal heating and cooling gaining in popularity

The earth is the largest, most efficient collector of the sun's energy. The temperature of the ground remains about 50 degrees throughout the year. Although this temperature is not warm enough in itself to heat a home, there is a tremendous amount of heat available. The only thing needed is a dependable way to move it from this collector and deliver it to the home in a usable form.

Geothermal heating and cooling is such a system. This system circulates water through a closed loop buried in the ground, picking up the BTUs, which it takes to a compressor. The BTUs are removed from the water and delivered to the home at about 110 degrees. Since the heat is already present, the only cost is for moving and removing the BTUs. This cost is small compared to the cost of producing heat. In fact, this system will produce 3 1/2 to 4 times the heat, per unit of cost.

The installation of the geothermal system is simple. The inside unit consists of the compressor, the water-to-air exchanger, and the blower unit. It takes up no more room than other systems. The rest goes outside, underground. The ground loop can be trenched, installed in uncased wells 100 to 150 feet deep, or submerged in a body of water.

The advantages

1. There can be extraordinary energy savings: up to 65 percent in some cases.
2. No outdoor equipment is required. This adds to the life of the equipment because it's not out in the extreme weather.
3. If service should be required, the equipment is indoors, where the serviceman is not at the mercy of the weather.

4. The system provides year-round comfort; heating, cooling, dehumidification, and much of your hot water.

5. There is normally a rapid payback (5 to 7 years: depending on fuel/system comparison): any home equipped for energy conservation is more marketable.

6. Since there is no combustion, no chimney or flue is required and there are no combustible gases in conditioned space.

7. The system is all-electric: no fossil fuels are consumed and there is no need for the expense of using a second utility, even if it's available.

8. The systems are extremely reliable, utilizing components developed through years of research, testing and experience.

9. Two-thirds or more the heat energy used comes indirectly from the sun: a renewable, non-polluting energy source.

The disadvantages

1. Initial first cost is higher than conventional systems (however, see advantage No. 5).

2. The common complaint of new heat pump owners is "the air feels cool." Those accustomed to the warmer air temperatures provided by fossil fuel furnaces will notice that the air from the ductwork is cooler. However, moving air that is the same as or slightly warmer than the body temperature will feel cool. This will not be a problem if you are forewarned. Air entering a structure around 90-110 degrees Fahrenheit or more can warm it to 68-75 degrees or warmer if the equipment is properly sized.

Plugging those little air leaks

Now that winter is here and we've enjoyed a couple of sieges of howling winds and blowing snow, many of us have learned—again—that our houses aren't as snug as they might be.

While it would have been better to have tackled all those little chores when it's nice, it's a good bet that a lot of homeowners have let the lessons of last winter go by.

Many people have found to their dismay that their house, which seemed to be nice and snug during last year's fairly mild winter, is susceptible to cold and drafts.

Even so, there are some things that can be done, besides just turning up the thermostat and hoping for the best. Even well-built houses can have "problem" walls, usually on the north side, and also on the side facing the prevailing winds. Or both.

If you've found that you have a problem room, or if your entire house is harder to heat than you remembered, you may be able to achieve greater comfort and lower costs with a few simple remedial steps. You can do some of these repairs inside the house, no matter what the weather is like outside. For others, you may be wise to wait for a warm spell.

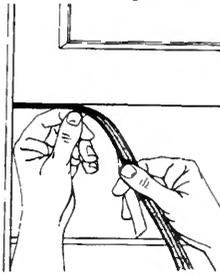
Even the best of houses will often let an amazing amount of cold air in around the electrical outlets on the outside walls. If you suspect that your outlets are leaky, wait until there's a good stiff breeze blowing outside and put your hand near the outlet. Chances are, you'll be able to feel that draft like the wall wasn't there.

Almost any home-supply store anywhere has little foam rubber backing plates that act as gaskets to minimize that problem. They are inexpensive and simple to install. All you need is a screwdriver and a few minutes. You simply take off the switch or outlet cover, place the gasket behind it, and screw the cover back on. Since this little chore is so simple and inexpensive, it probably should be your first step. If you can't do all the switches and outlets, be sure to take care of the problem ones first.

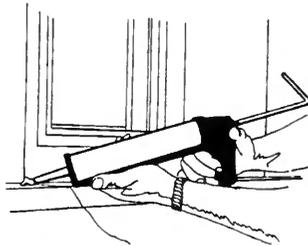
Windows can present problems, too. Often, all you need to do to check your windows is be in the same room they're in, and that'll be confirmation enough! Since they perform contradictory functions, they're fairly complex structures. They have to seal out the elements during some times, yet they need to be opened at others. Many of the problems windows give you are related to this open/

shut nature.

One of the first steps you need to take to cure your window drafts is to add weatherstripping, if there is none already there, or if what's there is no longer doing the job. You can buy little strips of adhesive-backed stripping, and they're also inexpensive. You just cut the strip to length where the window closes, peel off the tape that covers the adhesive, and apply it carefully. You'll probably need to do this at the top of the window, also.



If you feel around the outer edges of the window, inside the frame, you may still find that there's leakage. You can minimize that by putting in a shrink-fit film on the inside. While it looks like a daunting chore, it really isn't. You can buy kits at hardware and home-supply stores, and they usually include double-sided tape and enough film to do one or two windows. They come in different sizes, so you'll need to know how big your windows are. The kits are generic, so you may need to buy a larger film than you actually need and cut it to fit with scissors.



While it looks like a difficult task, the hardest part actually is peeling the backing off the silly double-sided tape!

After you get the tape up and the plastic cut to size, you apply the film, carefully, and press it against the tape, which you've peeled the backing off of, naturally. If it's not perfect, you're still okay. You can shrink it to fit with a hair dryer. Even a mediocre craftsman can do a presentable job.

Once you get that taken care of, your windows may still leak. The area around the outer edge of the window frame is often a source of difficulty, and that's a problem you'll have to go outside to take care of.

Actually, that's caused by a lack of caulking around the outside of the exterior window frame, and can be cured by the judicious application of a bead of caulk around the window. Occasionally people have tried to do a temporary interior fix with masking tape around the window frame. That works, but it's visible, unattractive, and will peel the paint off if it's left on too long. Don't do it unless there's a really horrendous draft, and you expect to be able to remove the tape and do a proper caulking job when the weather improves.

These few simple steps, most of which can be done inside the house, will help you cut your heating costs, and will make your house more comfortable, too.

Spring is time to think geothermal

It has been said—roughly—that in the spring, a young person's fancy turns lightly to other young persons. For those who are older, and who have a house to keep up, a family to provide for and bills to pay, spring tends to bring gratitude.

Not only are we thrilled for the end of winter, but we're grateful that the old furnace has squeaked through another winter without giving up the ghost.

With the heating season on the way out and the cooling season a month or so away, now might be a good time to give some thought to having a geothermal heating and cooling system installed in your home. If you're getting ready to build, you certainly ought to look into geothermal.

A geothermal system uses earth-stored energy in partnership with safe, clean electricity, to offer a hard-to-beat way to heat and cool your home.

The heart of the geothermal system is essentially a heat pump with a difference: but what a difference! The average air-to-air heat pump is essentially a reversible system that removes heat from your home in the summer and expels it to the outside air. It does the opposite in the winter, warming outside air and moving it into your home. You decide what it does simply by flicking a switch on your indoor thermostat.

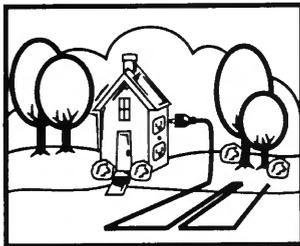
If the air-to-air heat pump has a disadvantage, it's that it starts losing its efficiency at about 10 degrees F., so you have to rely on another heat source to make up the difference.

A geothermal system doesn't have that problem. It draws its heat or coolness from a liquid-filled grid of plastic piping buried 5-6' underground. Once you get about 5 feet below the surface of the earth, the temperature in Illinois is a fairly consistent 55 degrees F., the year around.

Instead of having to cool 90-degree air in the summer, the unit is dealing with 55-degree air, and it does that very efficiently. When you need heat, the geothermal system is, again, working with a 55-degree medium. That's much better than the subzero weather air-to-air units have to cope with. All in all, about 70 percent of the "fuel" your unit needs comes from the solar energy absorbed by the earth and stored there.

Not surprisingly, the technology for the geothermal system, also known as a "closed-loop earth-coupled groundwater heat pump system," came from northern Europe. It is only natural that the system would develop in that area, with its harsh climate and high fuel costs.

The idea dates back to the 1940s, but offered no advantage to Americans in a time when the cost of heating and cooling a home was almost insignificant. The energy crunch of the early 1970s changed all that, and Americans started getting serious about economical comfort conditioning.



There was another factor, too. The piping and technology hadn't developed to the point that Americans would feel comfortable with them, and it wasn't until the 1980s that they came together. Early experiments with polyvinyl chloride (PVC) piping proved unsatisfactory, and until better piping could be developed, the system had no real future. Today's piping is expected to last 25-75 years in virtually any soil type. Present-day piping has better heat conducting properties than earlier materials had.

Most closed-loop systems are trenched horizontally in the yard around the home, but the stored solar energy can also come from well water or a pond, if it's large enough. If you don't have room for a horizontal loop, you can have a well drilled or use an existing one. If you need to have your yard trenched, it's usually not a big problem. The trenches are usually about 6 inches wide, and a simple reseeding will take care of the disturbed lawn. The pipes have no adverse affect on plants above them.

A big plus is that the heart of the unit is installed inside the house, in a garage, storage closet or crawl space, where it's protected from the elements. That prolongs the life of the unit, which is quiet enough that it won't be a bother.

Geothermal systems can save you even more money by providing hot water for your home. Some types of systems can save you up to 50 percent on your annual water heating bill by preheating tank water. These units are standard equipment on some systems and optional on others. Be sure to look into the possibility of having hot water, too.

While geothermal units seem to be too good to be true, they do have one disadvantage: They're expensive to install because of the trenching or well-drilling needed for the loop.

Don't let that deter you. They will save you so much money on your heating, cooling and water-heating costs that they'll pay for themselves much sooner than any other kind of system that's likely to be available to rural electric consumers. Ask the people at your electric cooperative for more information. You'll be glad you did!



Rural Highlights

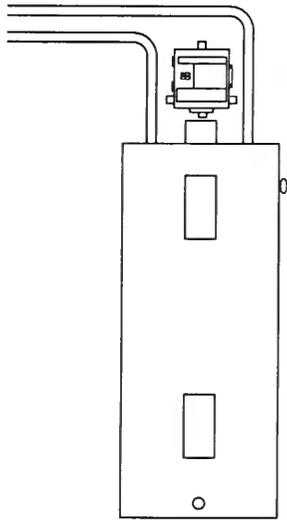
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 Manager: Del L. England

RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

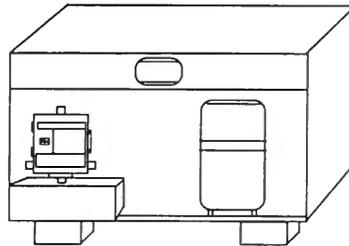
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AUBURN, ILLINOIS

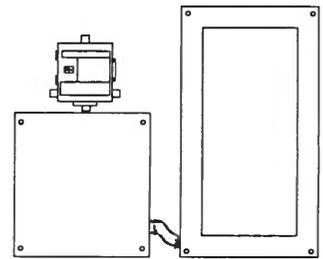
Peak switch options



Water Heater
\$3.50 per month
(12 months)



Air Conditioner
\$25 per month
(June, July, August)



Dual Fuel
4cents KWH
heat, cool, hot water

Members who allowed RECC to install a peak switch on their air conditioner when our demand side management program began have each received total credits of \$225. Those who participated in the electric water heater program have been credited \$129.50 over the same three-year period. Residents with a peak switch on their air conditioner and water heater realized

savings of \$354.50.

These members will continue to be rewarded for their early actions, but it is not too late for you to share in the savings. Simply fill out the form below and mail it in. Your peak switch will be installed free of charge and you will save money like the other 1300+ members.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Account Number: _____

Phone Number: _____

Water Heater

Air-Conditioner

Window

Central

The second annual contractors meeting was held January 25 at Edgewood Golf Course. This yearly gathering was designed to familiarize each other with available services and new technologies. Those in attendance included: general contractors, HVAC representatives, electricians, members of financial institutions, Rural Electric Directors, and RECC employees.

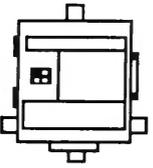
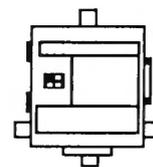
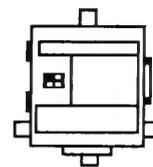
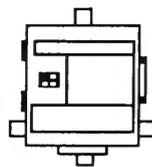
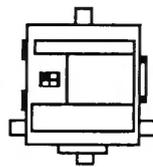
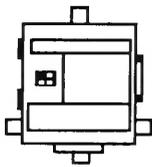
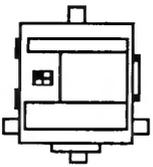
Information was presented to demonstrate the commitment of RECC to be competitive with surrounding utilities. Employees explained many ways to reduce energy cost and encourage new construction in our electrical territory. Such programs include Dual Fuel, peak switches, load management, and rebates.

Mike Keating of SEMCO Window Company discussed the recent advancements in the window industry. He explained the process of low-E glazing and the benefits of this process. He strongly

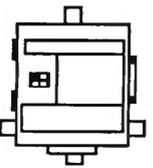
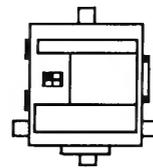
believes this is the most important feature to look for when purchasing new or replacement windows. Keating also demonstrated the need for storm windows even with today's improved window designs.

George Chrenka of Nu - Wool Company explained the various options of insulating homes and businesses. He compared the safety and economical advantages of cellulose insulation to those of fiberglass. Mr. Chrenka's company specializes in blown-in cellulose, which utilizes a wet application method to adhere to vertical surfaces. This process allows the cellulose to stick to walls without settling.

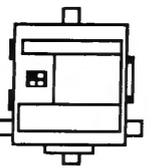
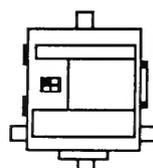
We would like to thank everyone who attended our contractor's meeting this year. Members who were unable to join us are encouraged to call us for more information about our programs, rebates, and efficient construction standards.



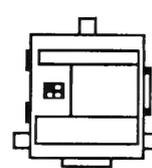
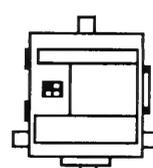
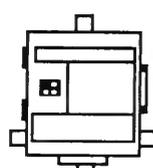
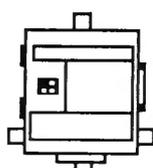
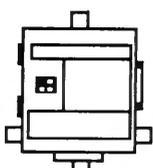
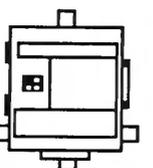
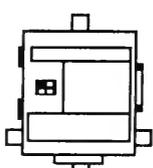
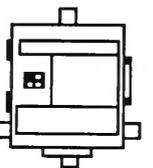
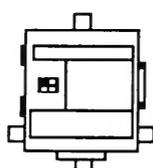
Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative offers its members a chance to receive monthly credits and help reduce costly peak demand. Requesting us to install a peak switch on your air conditioner and/or water heater will help you while helping your cooperative.



With an installed peak switch, members who have central air or a 240 volt window air cond. will be credited \$25 a month for June, July, and August. Those who heat water with electricity will receive \$42 per year.



Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative thanks everyone who has participated in our peak switch program.



g^{*}eothermal

It's closer than you realize.

Not too far away from where you live, maybe just down the street or around the corner, somebody is saving money and you're not. They are taking advantage of something that you could take advantage of, too. If you have a front yard or back yard, you can lower the cost of heating and cooling your home. You can also get free or very inexpensive hot water. The Geothermal Heating and Cooling System uses the constant warmth within the soil to move heat in or out of your home, depending on the season. Somebody near you has one, and they are enjoying the comfort, safety and savings. Fortunately, there is somebody else near you who can help you bring all of geothermal's benefits to YOUR home. You'll find their name just down the road.



Electric Cooperatives of Illinois

Getting the job done . . . TOGETHER

Little energy-saving steps add up

There are several steps you can take to save on your electricity bill around your home. Many steps are simple and don't cost much, such as caulking, weatherstripping, and replacing some incandescent light bulbs with fluorescents.

There are some that don't cost anything. Most involve a simple change of habits, a little attention to detail, or spending very little money.

You can save on your overall bill by being careful when you run your appliances. Most Illinois cooperatives are "summer peaking." Their electricity costs more during the hottest times of the day, during the hottest days of the year, than it costs at other times.

With that in mind, you'll know that you shouldn't use heavy appliances such as dishwashers, clothes washers and dryers, and electric ovens in the afternoon hours during hot spells. Try to use such equipment early in the morning or late at night. This will save your co-op money and save you money too.

You can enjoy direct savings on your bills by using appliances wisely. For example, many people keep their refrigerators colder than necessary. The recommended temperatures for the fresh food compartment is 36-38 degrees F., while freezer temperature should be about 5 degrees. If you have a separate freezer for long-term food storage, you should keep it at 0-5 degrees F. (Check with thermometer).

If you have manual-defrost refrigerators or freezers, you need to keep after the frost. As frost builds up, it boosts the amount of energy needed to keep your food cold. A quarter of an inch of frost in your freezer is too much.

Be sure your refrigerator door gaskets are airtight. You can check them by closing them gently on a piece of paper and trying to pull it out. If it slides out easily, you need a new seal, or your latch may need adjustment.

There are a few things you can do in the laundry to save energy by using your automatic washer and dryer less often and more efficiently. Wash full loads rather than "just a few things," and if you do wash half a load, set your washer's control for a partial load, if it enables you to.

And you can wash most clothes in warm water, with a cold rinse. Use hot water only when necessary, using only as much detergent as you need. Follow the directions on the box and avoid

the urge to add "just a little more." Oversudsing makes your machine work harder and takes more energy.

You can save by using a prewash or soak cycle to wash really dirty clothes. You may avoid having to wash them twice.

Fill clothes dryers, but don't overfill. Keep the lint screen clean, removing lint after each load. A plugged filter will make the dryer work harder, and is also a fire hazard.

Dry consecutive loads. Start-and-stop drying uses more energy because a lot is used to heat the dryer up to working temperature each time you begin.

Separate drying loads into heavy and light-weight items. The lighter ones take less drying time, and the dryer doesn't have to be on as long. Leave small, light items for last: you may be able to dry them after you turn off the heat, using heat retained by the machine from earlier loads.

If your dryer has an automatic dry cycle, use it. It'll stop the dryer as soon as your clothes are ready, without running any more than necessary. And you can save energy twice, if the weather permits, by using a solar-powered clothes dryer, formerly known as a clothesline. Not only will it save you the energy needed to dry the clothes, but it won't add heat to your home, either. Some believe line-dried clothes smell fresher, too.

You can save some energy during ironing by hanging clothes in the bathroom while you're bathing or showering. The steam often eases the wrinkles out for you. It's worth a try.

You can save energy in the bathroom by taking showers rather than baths, but you'll need to be careful. It's easy to enjoy a shower enough that you forget yourself and spend enough time under the spray to use more hot water than you'd use in a regular bath.

It takes about 30 gallons to fill the average tub, and a shower with a flow of three gallons a minute uses only 15 gallons in 15 minutes. If you use half cold and half hot water for bathing, you would save about five gallons of hot water every time you substitute a shower for a bath.

If you're interested in saving money on your electricity bill, you can do it if you're careful. While each of the tips mentioned are little things, they'll add up. Call your cooperative's energy advisor today for more tips on saving money and energy.



Rural Highlights

Board of Directors: Jim Ayers, John Beatty, Ted Dowson, R. Steven Gage, Curtis Hays, Lee Marten, Melvin Repscher, David White, and Lyle Yeaman.
 Manager: Del L. England

RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

217-738-6197

AUBURN, ILLINOIS

Building or remodeling?

If you're planning to build a new home on Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative's lines, remodel an existing home, or change your heating system or major appliances, read on! RECC has rebates, rates and ideas to save you money now and for years to come.

Any home with an electric heating system and electric hot water heater qualifies for RECC's special Dual Fuel rate of just 4 cents per kwh for heating, air conditioning and water heating. A second meter is installed by the cooperative to record these energy uses. There is a \$50 charge to the member for the meter and Peak Switch installation, and a \$4 monthly fee covers the extra reading and processing costs. This is the lowest rate we offer on the biggest energy users in your home!

Even if you don't have electric heat, you can still save on your air conditioning and electric water heating costs by having a Peak Switch installed.

For a central air conditioner connected to a Peak Switch, you'll get a credit of \$25 on your electric bills in July, August and September. For an electric water heater you can get a monthly credit of \$3.50 year-round.

Electricity is the cleanest, safest and most efficient energy source for your home. For information on these programs and other energy-saving ideas, call the RECC office today!



On-farm grain drying rate saves money

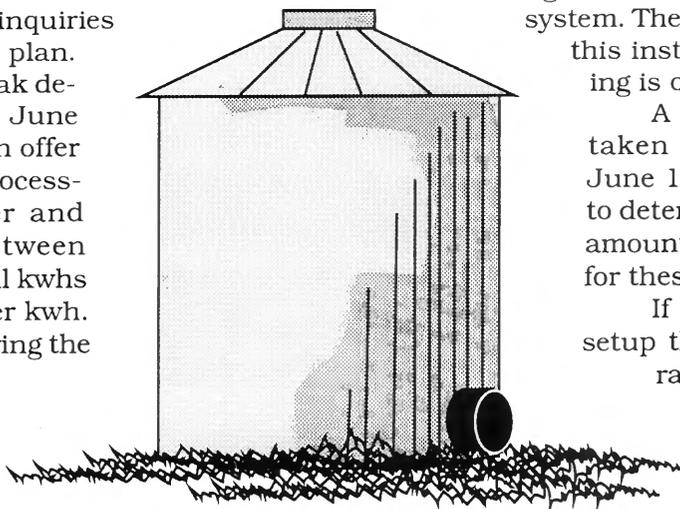
We've signed up more than 400 members on the new On Farm Grain Processing and Drying rate since its introduction in 1994, and we're still getting inquiries on this off-peak usage plan. Because our annual peak demand occurs between June 15 and Sept. 15, we can offer a lower rate on grain processing in the fall, winter and spring. For usage between Sept. 16 and May 31, all kwhs are priced at 4 cents per kwh. Regular rates apply during the summer peak period.

Bin sites with no other loads (machine sheds, water pumps, etc.) can be changed to the new rate with the existing meter setup. When other loads, in-

cluding homes, are served through the same meter as the grain dryer and bins, separate metering must be installed for the grain system. The member pays the cost of this installation, and the metering is owned by RECC.

A special meter reading is taken on these accounts on June 15 and again on Sept. 15 to determine the on-peak usage amounts. A charge of \$10 pays for these extra readings.

If you have a crop drying setup that isn't on this special rate yet, call us for details of the rate plan and free review of your installation and cost estimates. Off-peak kwh sales keep our costs lower and benefit all our members!



59th Annual Meeting set for June 13

The 59th annual meeting of Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative Co. is set for Thursday, June 13 at 7 p.m., at the Girard High School in Girard. We hope you will join us to help us conduct required business and visit with friends and neighbors.

Ms. Jane Hartman, an accomplished pianist who has worked with several big-name groups, will provide entertainment from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

As usual, we will serve a delicious pork chop dinner complete with all the fixins'. Serving begins at 5 p.m. We will be giving out desk clocks to each member of record who registers, and there will be

drawings for prizes, too. There will be commercial displays in addition to the business meeting, and we intend to issue capital credits checks to those members who purchased electric power in 1975. The total amount of returned patronage capital will be \$98,774.89. The election of three members to the board of directors will be an important part of the business meeting.

We hope you'll plan to attend the annual meeting of your cooperative. Please mark your calendar and plan to have dinner with us on Thursday, June 13!

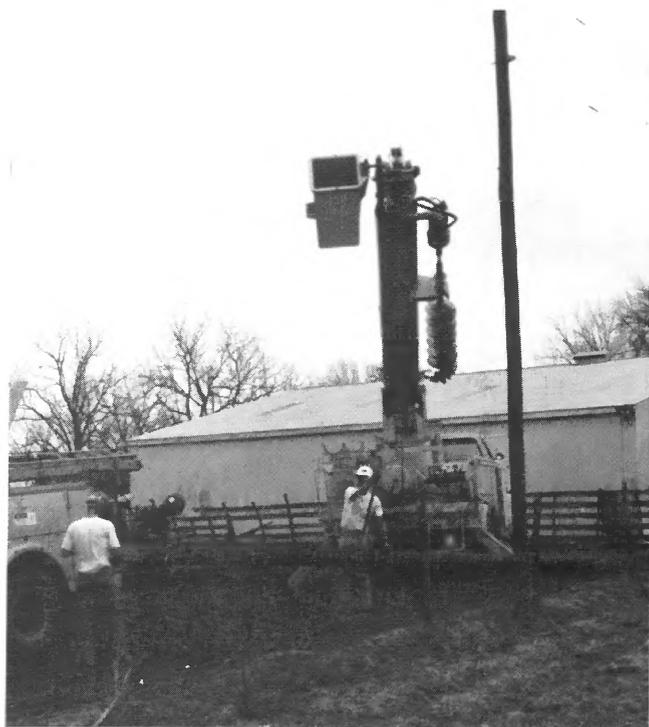
Overhead line replaced

As part of RECC's ongoing system improvement plan, six miles of overhead line were upgraded this spring southeast of Girard, near the Boston Chapel church. Operations Superintendent Delbert Boston says the old aluminum wire was a Number 4 size, which is not as heavy as today's standards. "The old wire is not as strong, and carries less current than the new Number 2 wire," he says.

Also, the new wire has a steel center strand woven within it that provides extra strength to withstand the ice and strong winds that often hit our area.

RECC's crew worked on this line replacement project in March and April, and the entire project is now completed, including several new poles set along the line. Some of this line followed private right-of-way across the middle of a section of land, so the crew was glad to have some dry weather to gain access to the fields.

"We want to provide the best reliability for our members that we can, and we'll be working on several other improvements on our 1,291 miles of line this year," Delbert says.



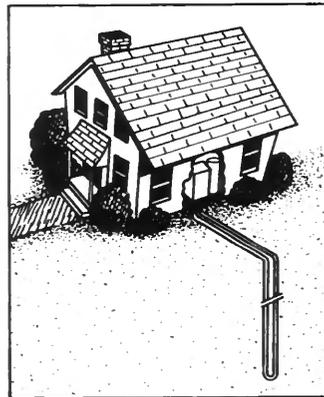
Neither rain nor snow nor curious cows keep the RECC crews from their efforts to maintain reliable service. To reach a pole on Johnny Pat Brown's farm southeast of Girard (at left), the line trucks had to navigate through a cattle lot and past several four-legged onlookers. Above, from left, Curt Nicholson, Tim Hemberger and Craig Costello prepare a new pole to be set.

.....
Getting the job done

TOGETHER

Electric Cooperatives of Illinois

Not far from the Mississippi River in western Illinois, there's a new subdivision in which all of the houses are heated and cooled by geothermal systems. The geothermal system's underground liquid-filled loops carry energy from within the soil, a method four times more efficient than fossil-fuel systems. The local electric cooperative played a big role in getting this low-cost heating and cooling system installed throughout the subdivision. All around Illinois, electric cooperatives are encouraging their members to install a geothermal system because it is the leader in safety, comfort and economy. The geothermal system improves the quality of life for members, something that electric cooperatives have been doing for more than five decades. They are working in all kinds of ways to make life better in rural areas. It's a job that's far from over, and it takes people working together to accomplish it. *There's a word for this. Cooperation.*



Electric Cooperatives of Illinois

Good for ALL Illinois

Miscellaneous energy-saving tips for summer

While your friends at the local electric co-op want you to use all the electricity you need, they want you to use it wisely, too, so you won't "break the bank."

We've stressed several times here that most energy used in homes, by far, is used for heating and cooling, and wise heating and cooling will save you the most money with the least amount of effort: All you need to do is to raise your thermostat setting in the summertime, or lower it during the heating season.

After heating and cooling—or "comfort conditioning, as it's sometimes known—the next two biggest users of electricity in most homes are water heating (15 percent) and refrigerators and freezers (also 15 percent).

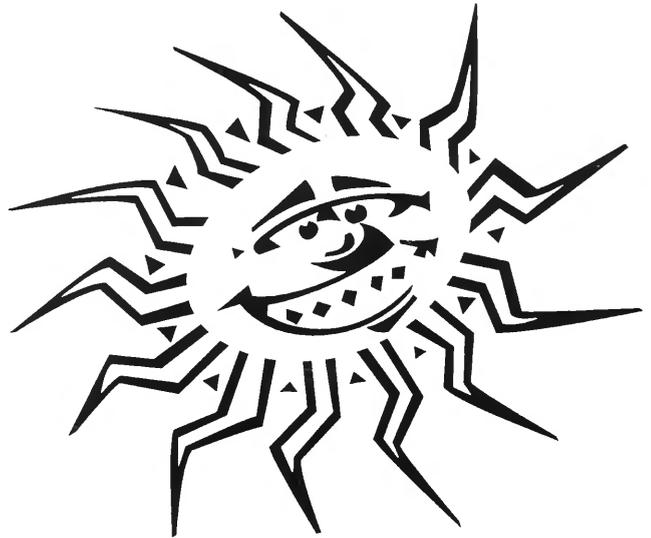
Some 24 percent goes into lighting, cooking and running other appliances. Obviously, you'll find the biggest savings in the higher-use categories. In addition to changing your thermostat, the addition of insulation and/or weatherstripping can help you save a lot on both heating and cooling, and you can often do some of the work yourself, using fairly inexpensive materials.

With summer fully here now after what may well have been the weirdest winter and spring in memory, you may want to think about paying some attention to your air conditioning system. Keep your cooling system well tuned, and see that it gets periodic maintenance by a professional serviceman. This isn't something you need to do every year, but if it's been a while since anyone's had a look at the machine's innards, you may want to call a serviceman.

It helps a unit run cooler if you plant trees or shrubs close by the outside unit, to shade it. Don't plant them so close that they'll shed leaves in the machinery and get in a repairman's way. A few well-placed shrubs will increase efficiency by as much as 10 percent.

But there are many simple no-cost steps you can use to save a little money, and they just involve a change of habits. It's old advice, but we tend to forget: Shut off the lights in an unused room. While that won't make you rich, it'll help a little, and it doesn't cost anything.

Many of us tend to leave TV sets on all the time, in the forlorn hope that something worth



watching is bound to come on eventually. A good-sized color TV draws a fair amount of current. You can save a little money by shutting yours off when you're not specifically watching a program you want to see.

A common energy waster that many people overlook is the bathroom ventilation fan. You need to run that little rascal for a few minutes after bathing or showering, but it's hard to remember to shut it off after it has done its job. If you can get into the habit of flipping that switch off after a 10-minute run time, you can often save on two counts: the energy used by the fan motor, and the energy used to heat or cool the air it exhausts.

Since much of the energy used in doing laundry goes to heat water, you can save a little by changing to cooler washes and rinses, whenever possible. And, of course, you may want to keep after faucet washers, wherever they are. It seems to be a natural law that the first faucet to leak will be the hot water one, and that wastes both water and heat.

If you are one of those fortunate folks who live in the country, you may have more to worry about than your town and suburban cousins, because you're far more likely to have your own well. That may include a pressure tank, which has a tendency to get "waterlogged" as time goes by, causing your pump to run more than necessary. Be sure to keep after that, too.



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RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

217-438-6197

AUBURN, ILLINOIS

RECC offering affordable water treatment system

Safe, clean, good-tasting water is what we all want from our faucets. Often it's not what we get, with minerals, chemicals and sometimes dangerous bacteria coming from wells and central water supply systems.

Water treatment systems can remove contaminants and improve the taste of drinking water, but the range of quality and effectiveness between various systems is huge. The best treatment equipment can cost thousands of dollars for an installation. Consumers are confused and turned off by the claims made by competing manufacturers.

To help our members understand the problems and solutions for safe water, Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative has a booklet available called "The Water Book." In a few pages it reviews the sources and symptoms of water quality problems, and the types of treatment systems that can solve some or all quality concerns. Even purchasing bottled water may not assure mineral-free quality, and it can be an expensive alternative requiring regular hauling and storage.

The Water Book points out that one treatment system removes the widest range of contaminants, with simple automatic operation. That treatment system is reverse osmosis, a process used for decades in the U.S. and other countries to produce safe drinking water. Reverse osmosis forces water molecules through a film membrane which eliminates pesticides, heavy metals, dissolved solids, bacteria and other contaminants.

Going one step further, RECC has identified a small, affordable reverse osmosis system that can produce about ten gallons a day of clean, fresh drinking water for your home. Called PureWater, the system can be mounted under the kitchen sink or in the basement. It automatically treats incoming water, stores it in a three-gallon tank, and sends it to a separate faucet at your sink for your convenience.

PureWater's manufacturer (in Missouri) estimates the cost of clean water at just four cents per gallon over six years, including purchase cost and scheduled filter replacements. RECC is offering the PureWater system for \$600, about half the

**PureWater systems
only \$600
from RECC!
Introductory
offer —
FREE installation
with first 25
purchases!**



cost of other automatic systems on the market. While many consumers can install the system themselves, RECC is making a bonus introductory offer to install the first 25 systems sold to our members FREE!

For more information on clean drinking water and the PureWater system, call the RECC office at (217) 438-6197 or (800) 245-7322. After hours, you can also dial the toll-free number and leave a recorded message. Just ask for a free copy of The Water Book and leave your name and mailing address.

If you have concerns about the safety of your water, have it tested by a professional lab service. For a solution to your water quality problems, ask about the PureWater system!

What do you know about the quality of your drinking water?

Common assumptions about tap water

- Water across the U.S. is the best in the world...pure, healthy, and safe to drink.
- Water treatment facilities remove contaminants from your drinking water.
- Government agencies know exactly what's in drinking water and test it thoroughly to make sure it's safe.

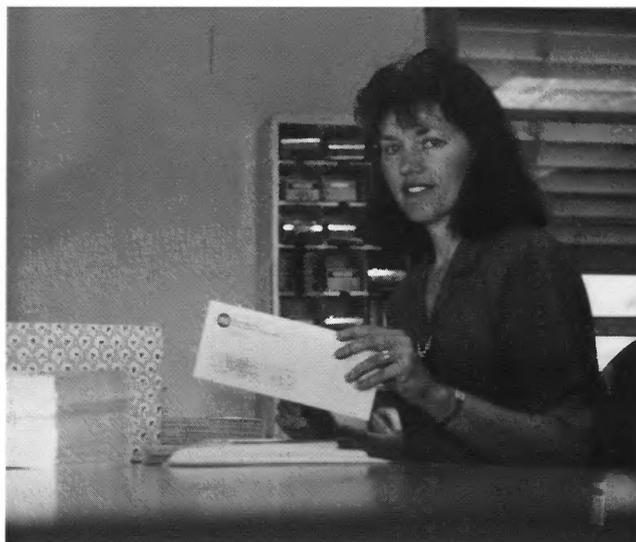
The check's in the mail

One of the benefits of cooperative membership is being realized this month by present and former members who purchased electricity from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative in 1975. Capital credit checks totaling \$98,774.89 are being distributed, as a return of the 1975 operating margins of RECC.

These "margins," or revenues in excess of our operating costs, would be "profits" at an investor-owned company. The money would go to an owner, or to the stockholders of a publicly-held corporation. Many owners don't even use the products sold by their company.

That's the difference in a cooperative...those who use the product own the business. Any annual operating margins at RECC are invested back into the distribution system, to build new lines or improve existing facilities. This reduces our borrowing needs, and saves on interest costs. Everyone benefits from the lower rate requirements, and members have a long-term stake in the co-op's financial health.

Many members already received their capital credit checks at the 1996 Annual Meeting in June, or picked them up at our office. The remaining checks are set to be mailed by the end of July,



Capital credit checks for electric purchases from RECC in 1975 are being prepared for mailing in late July by Carol Funk, EDP clerk.

according to office manager Dean Fuchs. "The return of capital credits assures that your cooperative is a non-profit organization, with you, the member, as its focus," he says.

Even though you're on vacation... your appliances continue to work.

Even though you may be gone for several days or even weeks, your home probably is still using energy. In fact, you may wonder why your bill isn't considerably lower because you were away. Here are some of the possible reasons:

Usage period.

The days you were away on vacation may have occurred during two billing periods, so any decrease in energy usage would be split between two bills.

Weather.

During the hot summer months, you may have made greater use of your air conditioner both before and after vacation.

Billing period.

Always look carefully at your bill to see exactly what days the billing period included.

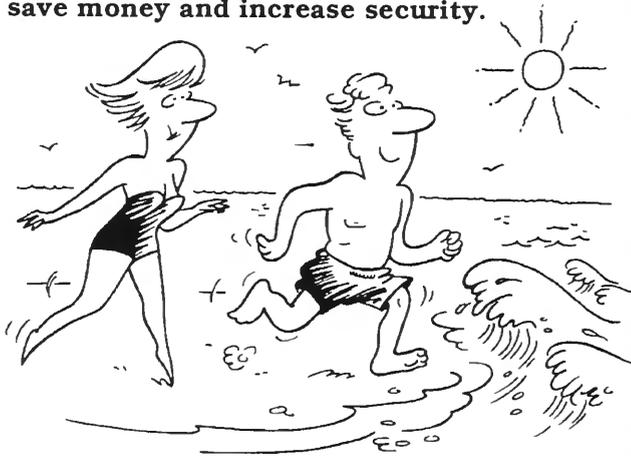
Major appliances.

Your water heater operates while you are away. Your refrigerator and freezer still run. These appliances are relatively large energy users.

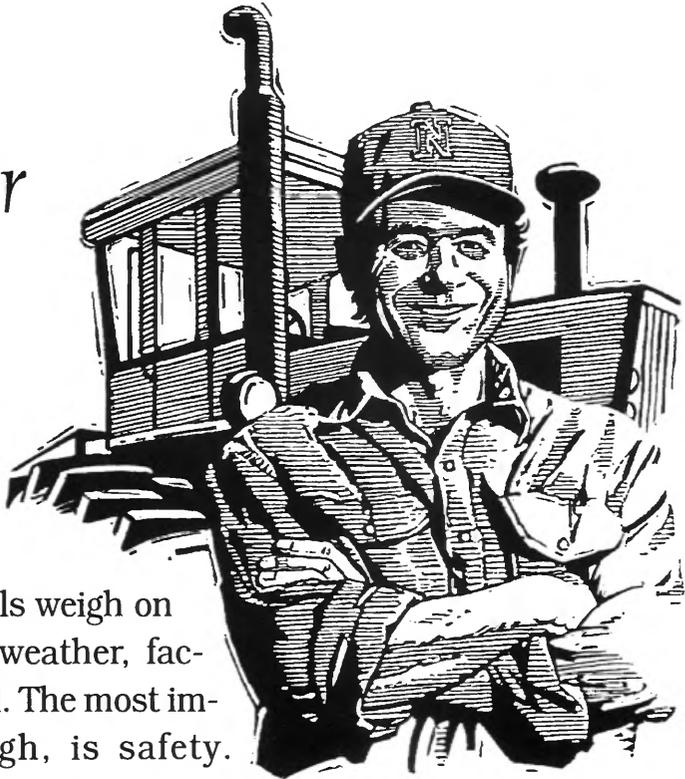
Before you leave, plan to take steps that will

reduce your home's energy consumption while you enjoy your vacation.

- **Turn off (or down) the thermostat on your water heater.**
- **Turn off your air conditioner or set the thermostat at a higher temperature.**
- **Keep indoor and outdoor lighting to a level of security which you consider adequate.**
- **Use timers to turn lights on and off; save money and increase security.**



Don't let your guard down



This time of year, details weigh on your mind . . . money, weather, factors vital to your livelihood. The most important concern, though, is safety. Tragedy can occur in that flash of an instant when you let your guard down — taking a short cut, overlooking basic safety rules. To ensure future harvests, always work the safe way.

- ☛ ***Watch out for overhead power lines.***
- ☛ ***Wear appropriate protective equipment.***
- ☛ ***Make sure helpers are familiar with equipment they are using.***
- ☛ ***Shut off power before fixing or unclogging machines.***
- ☛ ***Keep extended machinery away from power pole guy wires.***
- ☛ ***Keep shields in place.***



Electric Cooperatives of Illinois

An Affirmative Action Equal Opportunity Employer

Fuses, breakers and electrical safety

Probably every house built since the advent of electrical service has had some kind of circuit-overload protection built into its wiring system.

Years ago, fuses were used, and there was a separate one for each circuit. Builders who wanted to "cut corners" could do it easily by cutting back on the number of circuits they provided. Unfortunately, many took advantage of that option, and there are thousands of houses all over

the country still grossly under-wired.

Some older homes have just two circuits: one for lights in the ceiling, the other for wall outlets.

Such a house will give its owner endless headaches in the form of blown fuses and frustrations.

Often, a person who wants to plug in a toaster will need to shut off a couple of lamps or unplug a refrigerator or TV set to keep from blowing a fuse.

Most of those houses were built years ago, when a radio was the primary form of entertainment, and when a refrigerator was, in all likelihood, the only electric kitchen appliance. Clothes were dried outside on a clothesline. It didn't take many circuits to serve such a house.

Now, we have TV sets—often several in a house—microwave ovens, VCRs, toasters, electric skillets, automatic bread makers, and any number of other gadgets that we enjoy so much.

Now that we all tend to enjoy all those things, many of us have problems with our electricity. Fuses and circuit breakers are designed to protect us from the dangers of short circuits and overloads.

You might think of a fuse as a form of safety valve that pops off when something's wrong. A fuse is intended to be the weakest link in your home's wiring system. If you get an overload and something overheats, any damage that's going to be done will take place in the safety of your fusebox, and will be done to the fuse itself, as it is sacrificed to save the house.

When fuses blow frequently, there is always the

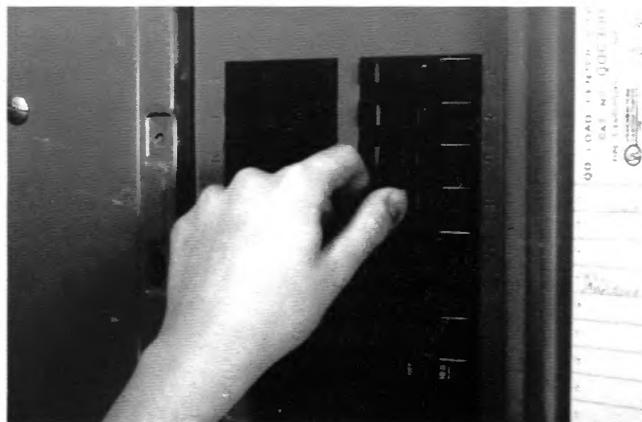
temptation to "outsmart" them by using a higher-ampere fuse than what the circuit was designed for. Don't try it! That just moves the danger spot out of your fusebox and into your wiring system, where it may cause a fire. Using a coin or piece of foil to bypass the fuse will do the same thing.

A stopgap measure to keep fuses from blowing is to use fewer electrical devices, but that's just treating the symptoms. If you have persistent electrical problems, your best bet in the long run is to call a qualified electrician and have him rewire your home, or at least add some circuits.

Make sure he knows what kind of appliances and lights you have and how many of them you're likely to use at one time. And remember that if you're like most of us, you have far more electrical goodies than you had a decade ago, and you'll probably add a few more in the future. There are a few shortcuts an electrician can take advantage of to make your wiring job cheaper, but there's one thing you should insist on. Tell him you want the



Fuses such as these are no longer in widespread use, having been replaced by breakers.



Breakers such as these are more convenient than fuses: if they trip often, you still have problems.

job done "to code." He'll know what you're talking about. The National Electrical Code was developed over the years to set standards for safe electrical wiring, and to prevent the construction of houses with just one or two circuits. A house wired to code will have at least the minimum number of circuits to do the job right.

While we've discussed fuses here, they have been replaced to a large extent by circuit breakers. They operate much like fuses, but they aren't destroyed by an overload problem. If a breaker "trips," you can go to the breaker box, reset the breaker, and you're back in business.

Even so, breakers that trip frequently are a sign of problems that need to be cured. You need to avoid an overload, or have an electrician find the short circuit that's causing your breakers to trip. And don't forget to insist that any work be up to code. It's a definite safety necessity, not a luxury.



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RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

217-438-6197

AUBURN, ILLINOIS

Check out these payment options from RECC! Give us a call for more details!

Automatic bill payment

You can pay your electric bill without writing out a check, licking a stamp or dropping an envelope in the mail by using our Electronic Funds Transfer Plan for your bill payment. You'll receive a monthly billing statement for your records, but it will say "Bank Draft Do Not Pay." RECC gains in efficiency and less paperwork handling, and you'll never have to worry about late payment charges!

Credit card payments

Any RECC charges can be paid through your Visa/MasterCard, either in person or over the phone. Whether it's a new service connection fee or your monthly electric bill, your card can provide instant payment to the Cooperative. Your credit card statement itemizes all your charges for the month, and lets you pay for multiple items with one check! There is a small convenience fee for each charge card transaction.



Light the night

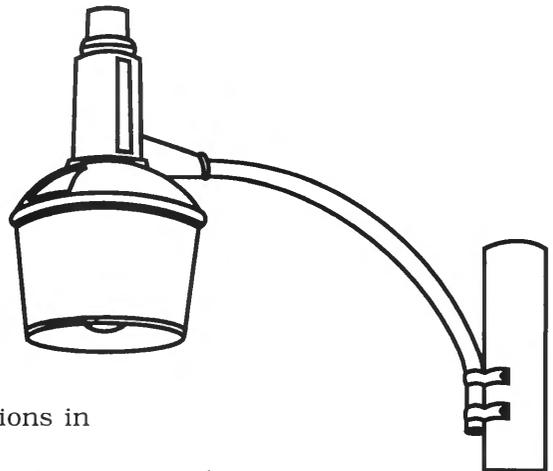
Don't let the dark discourage visitors and encourage intruders around your house, farm or business. RECC's security lighting program provides high-efficiency, dusk-to-dawn light at a low monthly cost.

We'll install a 100-watt high pressure sodium lighting fixture on an existing pole, and maintain and operate the light for just \$7.25 a month. The energy used is included in this fee, so your meter doesn't register the light's consumption. If the light or photocell control fails, just let us know and our crews will repair it promptly!

Lighted driveways and farmsteads are safer than being in the dark. You'll see where you're going, any obstructions in your driveway, and who's coming onto your property.

For less than 25 cents a night, you'll be more secure whether you're at home or away.

If you need even more light, we have larger sizes, too. A 250-watt high pressure light is available for \$9.25, and for really large areas a 400-watt light is just \$12.25 a month. These high pressure sodium lights give a soft amber glow like most newer street lights in town.



Convert and save

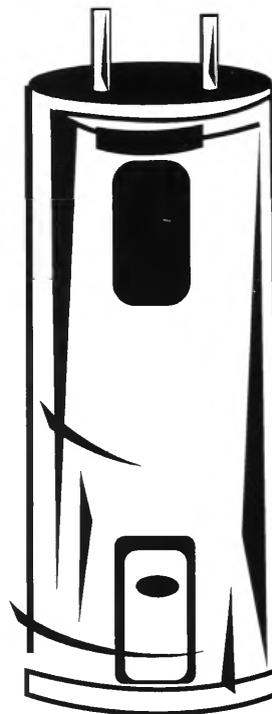
If you have an older mercury vapor security light from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative, you can have it switched over to the new high pressure sodium technology. Most of the bluish mercury lights are 175-watt, and cost \$8.75 a month. A 100-watt sodium light puts out more light, but costs only \$7.25 a month due to its lower energy consumption. Just call our office if you'd like an existing mercury vapor light changed to a sodium light (at no charge). You can even buy the old mercury fixture for \$5.00 to use elsewhere on your property!

Electric water heaters are safer than gas

Heating water with electricity is seven times safer than heating with gas, according to a study by the National Fire Protection Agency. Rebates and operating incentives offered by RECC also help make electric water heating economical!

The NFPA found that gas water heaters cause seven times as many house fires as electric water heaters. Electricity offers several advantages for safety and convenience:

- Electric water heaters do not use air for combustion, so there is no danger of explosion from gas leaks, no danger of carbon monoxide poisoning, and no compromise of indoor air quality.
- Electric water heaters do not require the purchase of expensive carbon monoxide alarms associated with gas heating equipment.
- Electric water heaters can be placed virtually anywhere with no need for a flue or vent.
- Electric water heaters require less maintenance because there is no pilot light, no vent, no flue or heat exchanger to corrode.
- Electric water heaters have more insulation than most gas models because they can be insulated on all sides - including the top and bottom.



- Electric water heaters are 100% efficient, since the heating elements are in direct contact with the water, while gas water heaters lose 40-60% of their energy up the flue.

Save money with an electric water heater

You can save money two ways with an electric water heater through RECC's programs! First, your purchase cost can be reduced by rebates of \$50 when replacing an older electric unit, or \$100 when replacing a gas water heater. Electric water heaters are generally less expensive than gas units to begin with, and our rebates add to your savings!

Second, you can have a Peak Switch installed at no cost for your water heater, and receive a credit of \$3.50 toward your energy charges. (No bill will be less than the monthly facilities charge). The Peak Switch is part of our Demand Side Management

system to reduce loads on the days of heaviest electric usage. Since your water heater has built-in hot water storage, the heating elements can be turned off for a few hours without disrupting your routine.

Add in the longer average life of an electric water heater compared to gas models, and the simple maintenance requirements, and electric water heating comes up as the best choice for your home! Call our office for more details

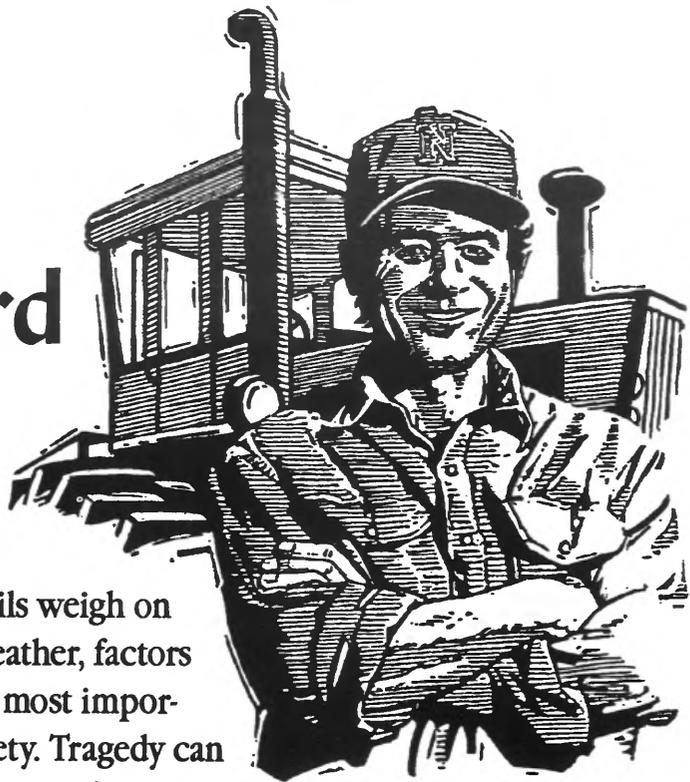
on equipment rebates, or to get Peak Switch savings on an existing electric water heater!

**Electric water heaters
earn a credit of
\$3.50 per month on
RECC's Peak Switch
program.**

**October
is
Cooperative
Month**



Don't let your guard down



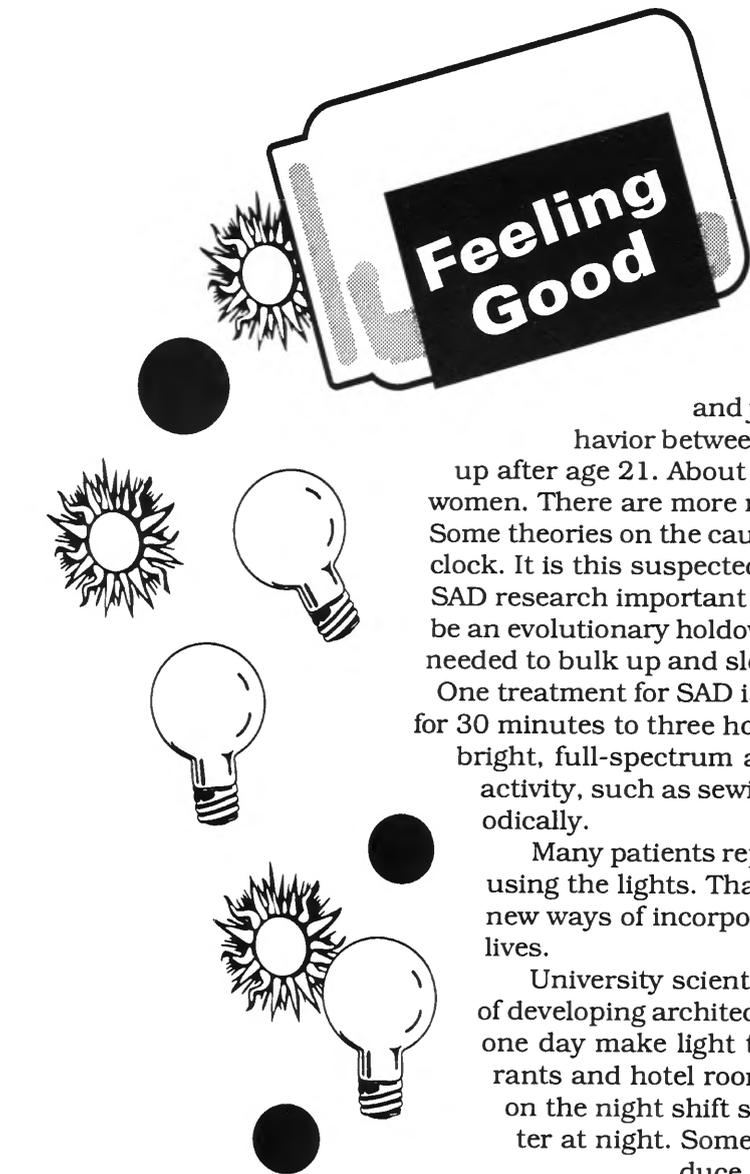
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Light cures the winter blues

When all the reds, yellows and oranges of fall come upon us, about 10 percent of the population get the blues. The moodiness and depression that set in with the first signs of winter now have a name seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. And one of the ways people are fighting this malady is by sitting in front of bright light.

SAD research, which has been going on for about a decade, indicates that millions of people may suffer from severe depression, crying spells, feelings of guilt and helplessness, cravings for sweets

and junk food, listlessness, and even suicidal behavior between September and March. SAD usually shows up after age 21. About 85 percent of the documented cases involve women. There are more recorded cases in the North than the South. Some theories on the cause of SAD suggest a problem with the body's clock. It is this suspected relation to the body clock that could make SAD research important for everyone, even non-sufferers. SAD could be an evolutionary holdover from prehistoric days when cave dwellers needed to bulk up and slow down in order to survive winter.

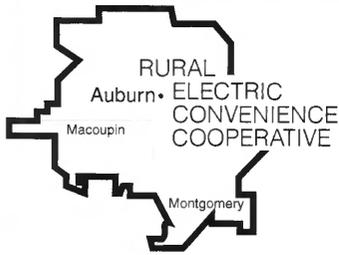
One treatment for SAD is light therapy. Patients are instructed to sit for 30 minutes to three hours every morning and evening in front of a bright, full-spectrum artificial light. They engage in some kind of activity, such as sewing or reading, and glance into the light periodically.

Many patients report a vast improvement in their moods after using the lights. That is prompting researchers to come up with new ways of incorporating the energizing power of light into our lives.

University scientists and private industry are in the process of developing architectural lighting and portable lamps that could one day make light therapy available in homes, offices, restaurants and hotel rooms. Some claim that therapy helps workers on the night shift sleep better during the day and perform better at night. Some who travel have used the lights to help reduce the sleepiness induced by jet lag. There is growing evidence that exposure to certain intensities of light at specific times of day and for particular durations can cure some kinds of insomnia and improve health.

Dr. Wayne London, a psychiatrist who researches the effects of artificial living conditions, contends there is evidence of a relationship between light and some cancers, premenstrual syndrome and sick days for school children. He cites circumstantial evidence that light may even affect Alzheimer's disease, alcoholism, multiple sclerosis and possibly even fertility.

One new light therapy light looks like an ordinary lamp but can be programmed by a microprocessor to reproduce the intensity of a midsummer Hawaiian sunrise. That, researchers say, could provide a refreshing awakening for an apartment dweller in Manhattan in February. There are also glasses and hats designed to provide the necessary light to the eyes.



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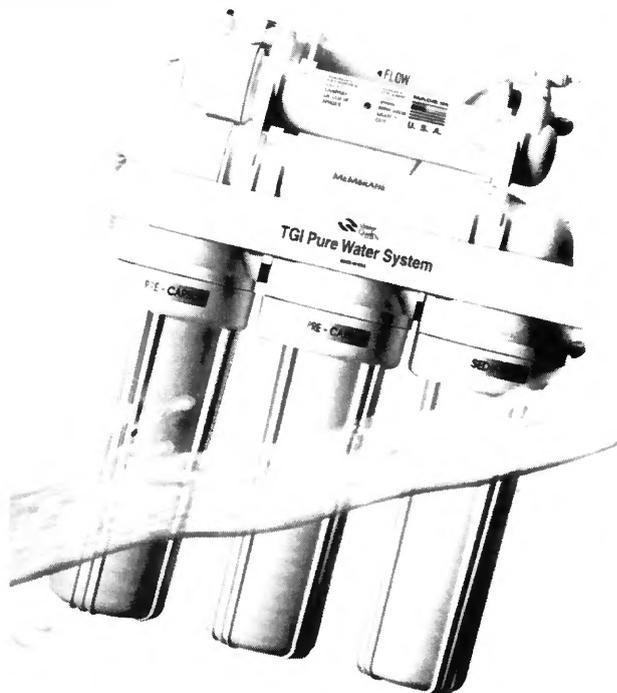
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Light the holidays safely



For the next few weeks you'll probably be busily decorating for the holiday season. Here are a few ideas that can make this festive time safe for your family.

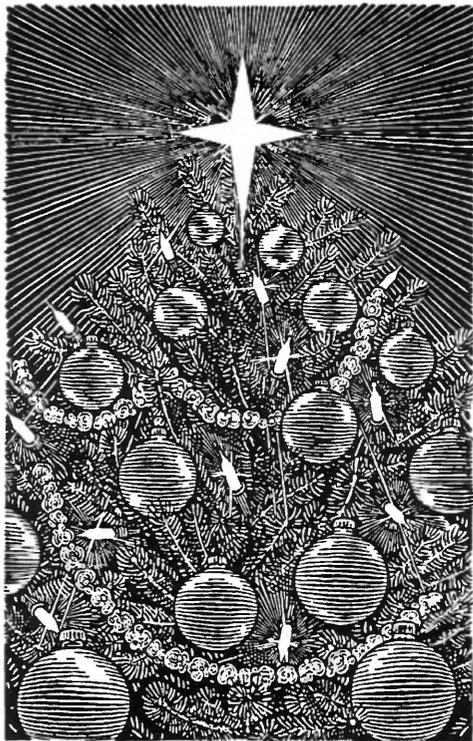
- Before decorating the tree check your strings of lights for cracked or frayed cords, exposed wires and broken sockets. Throw away faulty equipment.
- Use only strings of lights listed by the Underwriters Laboratory or the Canadian Standards Association.
- Don't leave any light sockets empty. Small children may put their fingers in a socket and receive a potentially fatal shock.

- Always disconnect strings of lights before working on them.
- Be sure to replace burned-out miniature bulbs with bulbs designed for the same voltage. They all look the same, but read the packaging carefully!
- For decorating outside, use lights that are designed for outdoor use.
- Use insulated staples to fasten the strings to the house, etc. Never drive a nail through the insulation of a wire.
- Never decorate a metallic tree with electric lights. Damaged wire insulation could put an electric charge on the entire tree.

Don't fret about lighting cost

You shouldn't lose any sleep worrying about the cost of operating typical Christmas lights. Colors and flashing bulbs make up for their low intensity and small energy use. A string of 50 outdoor 7½-watt bulbs totals only 375 watts. These lights would use less than ½ kilowatt hour of electricity for each hour they're turned on, costing less than a nickel an hour. Miniature lights use even less, usually pulling 50 to 100 watts per string. You can operate several strings of these lights every evening in December for just a few dollars, so enjoy the festive season!





The light fantastic.

It just wouldn't be Christmas without them. Like sugar cookies, rolls of wrapping paper and familiar carols, those strands of colorful lights help make up that mixture that is Christmas. The main ingredients, though, remain faith and hope for mankind. The yuletide celebrates this optimism, renewing our dedication to the principles and goals that brighten our lives and the lives of our neighbors. And, your electric cooperative sends to you our deepest wishes for a peaceful and joyous holiday season.



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