

A deregulated electricity market means choice.



You can help choose the future of your electric co-op.

Yes, you. Electric cooperatives were formed by individuals to serve their own needs, not profit-seeking investors. They are run by folks just like you—men and women who care about the future of their communities, and who want high quality service and competitive rates. Your cooperative will be making many important decisions in the next few years that will affect you, your family, and your hometown. That's why it's more important than ever for you to attend your cooperative's annual meeting, learn more about this issue, and cast your vote.

We get our power from you



Electric Cooperatives of Illinois
Good for all Illinois

Affirmative action, equal opportunity employers



Rural Highlights

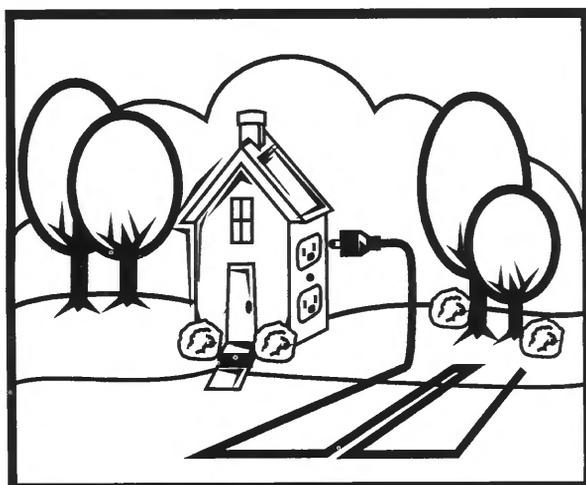
Board of Directors: Jim Ayers, John Beatty, Ted Dowson, R. Steven Gage, Curtis Hays, Lee Marten, Melvin Repscher, David White, and Lyle Yeaman.
 President/CEO: Del L. England

RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

217-438-6197

AUBURN, ILLINOIS

Soyland heating equipment rebates end June 30



Members who install high-efficiency electric heating equipment receive rebates from the cooperative to reduce their up-front cost. Part of this rebate amount comes from our wholesale power supplier, Soyland Power Cooperative. With new wholesale rates and smaller operating margins now in effect, Soyland has decided to eliminate their heating equipment rebates as of June 30, 1998. RECC will continue to pay rebates for electric heating installations, as well as electric water heaters, ranges and clothes dryers.

The rebates in effect until June 30 are:

	<u>RECC Rebate</u>	<u>Soyland Rebate</u>	<u>Total Rebate</u>
Geothermal systems	\$250/ton	125/ton	\$375/ton
Air source heat pumps (With electric back-up)	\$200/ton	125/ton	\$325/ton
Resistance electric heat (Permanently installed)	\$30/KW	30/KW (5 KW Min.)	\$60/KW (5 KW Min.)

After June 30, 1998, only the RECC portion of the above rebates will be available. If you're planning an electric heat installation in a new or existing home, you must get the units installed and your rebate application completed before June 30 to get the total rebate shown! Call our office if you are considering any new construction or remodeling. Electric heating systems offer the best safety, comfort and energy savings, and there's a system to suit whatever need you may have.

Insurance mailing NOT from your cooperative

The Reserve National Insurance Company in Oklahoma continues to mail solicitations to local rural residents, calling itself A National Association of Rural Co-Operative Members. Once again we remind you that this company is not affiliated in any way with Rural Electric Conve-

nience Cooperative. We do not endorse this company, nor do we provide member names to them. You should use your normal good judgment in deciding whether to do business with this particular company, and check their background before you make any purchase.

Attention high school juniors!

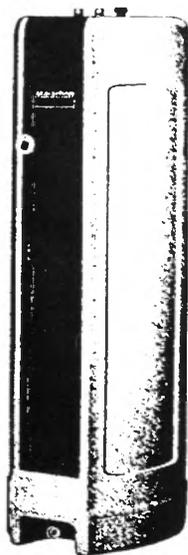
Area high school juniors can have fun while they learn in the Rural Electric Youth Day/ Youth Tour programs sponsored by RECC. Up to 10 local students will be hosted by RECC at the Illinois Youth Day program on April 22, touring the Capitol and other historic sites and meeting with their state legislators. Two of those students will be selected to attend the Youth To Washington tour, June 12-19, with about 1,000 young people from around the country.

Any junior attending a high school in RECC's service area is eligible for these expense-paid programs. Application request forms are being sent to local schools, or students can call our office. We will mail a complete application kit and background information directly to the student. The application includes a summary of the student's school and civic activities and accomplishments, and a brief essay question pertaining to the rural electric program.

Applications must be returned to RECC by March 16, and the ten students selected for the Illinois Youth Day program will be notified by March 31 so that they can arrange their school schedules around the trip on April 22. Transportation will be provided from Auburn to Springfield and back. After the day's activities in Springfield, the students will come to RECC's office in Auburn for individual interviews to select two winners for the trip to Washington, D.C. They will be judged on their application information, personal poise and confidence, and demonstrated understanding of the rural electric program.

Call our office at (800) 245-7322 and ask for Dana Smith, Director of Member & Public Relations for more information. Don't let our local students miss this chance to meet new friends, learn about our government and co-ops, and have fun!

Now available from RECC...



Marathon WATER HEATERS

- Plastic tank has "lifetime" warranty
- Highest energy efficiency rating
- Lightweight, east to install
- Attractive plastic shell

SPECIAL PRICING FOR RECC MEMBERS

	Replacing electric (includes \$50 rebates)	New home or replacing gas
Marathon 50 gallon water heater	\$400	\$200
Marathon 75 gallon water heater	\$475	\$275

Both models warrantied not to leak as long as you own your home!

Call for details on these and our other water heater rebates.

(800) 245-7322

Five free quick and easy ways to save energy in your home. . .

You could probably save a lot on your power bill every year, if you fixed all the energy wasters in your home. Every home is different, but imagine the impact a 5 or 10 percent savings could have! Best of all, none of these ideas will cost you anything but a little time, so why not get started right away?

1. Use your thermostat like the cruise control in your car.

When you're driving your car, you know what happens when you speed up and slow down, or drive fast. You waste gas. That's what happens when you frequently change the temperature setting on your thermostat: You waste electricity. Set your thermostat once in the morning and once in the evening, and resist the temptation to monkey with it at other times. Or install an automatic setback unit to do the job for you.

2. Take advantage of the sun.

You don't need a solar heating system to take advantage of the sun's warmth during winter. Just watch the sun's movement across your home to see which windows get plenty of sunlight, and open their blinds, shades and drapes to let the sun shine in. Close them when the sun's gone, to keep the heat in.

3. Turn off exhaust fans as soon as you're done.

Exhaust fans are handy in a kitchen or bathroom. But as soon as the fan's job is finished, shut it off. Otherwise, you'll pump heated air outside, and your heating system will have to work to catch up.

4. Close the door on wasted energy.

Are you heating a room you don't use? If so, close all registers, doors and windows, and check to make sure none of the items you've stored there need to be kept at normal room temperature.

5. Close your fireplace damper.

Up to eight percent of the warm air from your heat pump or furnace will go right up the chimney every day you leave your fireplace damper open. When there's no fire, close the damper. And even when a fire is burning, it's a good idea to use glass doors to conserve heat.

. . .and five easy ways to make it safer

1. Use safety covers.

Put safety covers on unused wall outlets so kids won't explore them with tiny fingers. Replace broken wall plates.

2. Take care of cords.

Replace frayed or cracked extension cords. Never nail or staple them to the wall or floor. And keep furniture off the cords, even if they're under a rug.

3. Use extension cords wisely.

Extension cords are meant for temporary use. Don't use them as permanent household wiring.

4. Don't misuse plugs.

Use three-prong plugs on three-prong outlets. Never cut the third prong off to make it fit. And don't force plugs into outlets if they don't fit easily.

5. Use GFCIs.

Install ground-fault circuit interrupters in bathrooms and kitchens. They help prevent electrocutions where water and electricity might mix.





Taking the Big Step?

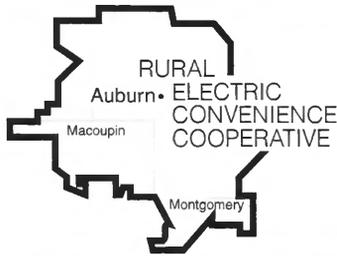
When you take that big step and remodel or build your new home, spend as much time thinking about your home's energy source as you did your China and crystal, the floor plans, and the carpet pattern.

When you choose electricity, you choose the safe, dependable, low-cost alternative. No flames. No fumes. No fuel tanks to fill.



Good for all Illinois.

An affirmative action, equal opportunity employer



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.
President/CEO: Del L. England

RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

217-438-6197

AUBURN, ILLINOIS

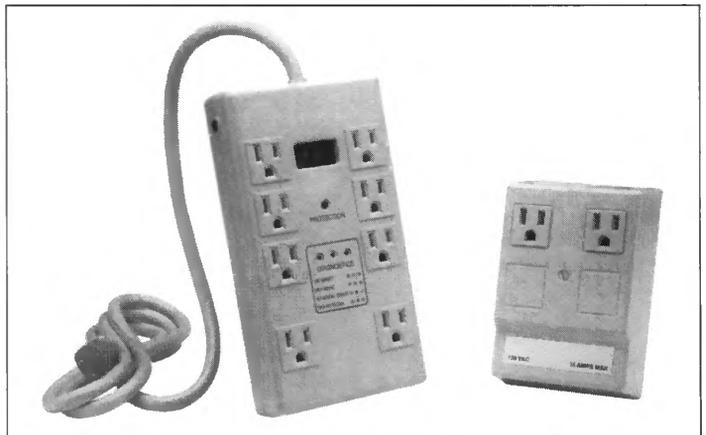
New surge suppressor program protects you from lightning damage

Our homes today are filled with sophisticated electronic equipment and expensive appliances. These devices are more sensitive than ever before to voltage surges from lightning and other sources, and damages can result in costly repairs. For this reason, Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative has developed a surge suppression lease program that goes a long way in reducing this type of inconvenience.

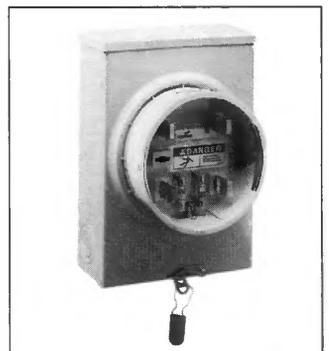
Starting at the meter socket, we offer a whole-house protection system that "bleeds off" excess voltage before it gets to your home wiring and appliances. The "Storm Trapper" meter-base surge suppressor is warranted to protect your refrigerator, range, microwave, freezer and other appliances from voltage surges coming in on the electric line. RECC will install the Storm Trapper for a \$4.95/month lease payment on your electric bill, which is less than 17 cents a day.

We don't stop there, however. The three-year lease agreement includes a plug-in suppressor strip for inside your home to protect sensitive electronics like TVs, VCRs, stereos and computers. You can choose a model that includes a phone line protector for computers that are connected to the Internet, or a plug-in strip with coax cable connection to protect your TV from surges coming in on an antenna or cable television wire. Other specialty devices are available for sale to protect well pumps, outdoor motors, and other equipment.

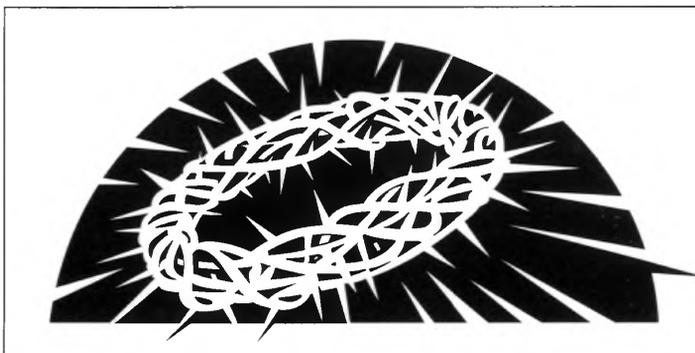
For more information on the Storm Trapper surge suppressor system, or if you'd like to enroll in our lease program, please call the Cooperative office at (800) 245-7322.



Plug-in surge suppression strips.



Storm Trapper® HSE Meter Socket Arrester (4-Jaw Model Shown).



Office closing

Our office will be closed April 10 in observance of Good Friday. Enjoy a blessed Easter!

Introducing ICARE service



RECC is now offering CareGard, a personal emergency response system that is tied to the Interactive Care (ICare) monitoring service. Together with ICare, we can help area residents obtain added security in their homes — around the clock. At the touch of a button, the subscriber is in two-way voice contact with trained operators who will summon the appropriate assistance, whether it's a true emergency or merely a helping hand from a neighbor.

We can explain the ICare program, install the simple CareGard console, and even add optional features like activity monitors, pill reminders, and smoke or carbon monoxide detectors, so you or your loved one can enjoy the privacy of living at home with the security of the ICare emergency response center at your fingertips.

Call Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative at (800) 245-7322 for more information on the ICare program and a free demonstration!

Consolidation plan would create Prairieland Service Cooperative

In January, RECC's board of directors announced that we are considering a plan to consolidate our cooperative with Menard Electric Cooperative, based in Petersburg. A new organization would be created called Prairieland Service Cooperative, a name which represents the local, service-oriented purpose of our business. The new co-op would serve about 14,000 consumers in 11 counties stretching from Pekin to Litchfield and Jacksonville to Decatur. Three informational meetings were held in March around our service area to share more details of the consolidation plan with the members and answer questions about the future challenges facing the cooperative.

Any changes made in the organization of your co-op must be for the benefit of the member-owners, and your Board believes that consolidating to create a larger, stronger cooperative will offer more and better services at a reasonable price in the future. The final decision will be in your hands, however, since a consolidation plan must be approved by a two-thirds majority of members voting at the co-op's Annual Meeting. The Board intends to present the consolidation proposal to you at this year's Annual Meeting, to be held June 11 at Lincolnwood High School in Raymond. If the consolidation is approved at the Annual Meeting, the new cooperative organization would begin on Jan. 1, 1999.

Watch for more information in the Rural

Highlights newsletter, or call the RECC office if you have a particular question. You are also strongly encouraged to attend the Annual Meeting in June to hear a final presentation on the consolidation proposal and cast your vote!



Avoid a shock--call before you 'disturb the earth'!

Experts tell us that the shorter winter days, with their drabness and scarcity of sunlight, give many people S.A.D., or Seasonal Affective Disorder. Regular people call this phenomenon "the winter blahs."

The situation is made worse by another condition health wonks refer to as "cabin fever," which is what happens to people when lousy weather keeps them from getting to the mall. Anyway, as spring approaches and days lengthen, that brings out another condition known as (pardon the scientific jargon) spring fever.

When spring fever hormones collide with the winter blues germs inside the human body, that causes perfectly normal people to do strange things. Some have the burning desire to head for the nearest mall, while others forsake their perfectly good kitchens and go outside to burn their food.

Still others get the uncontrollable urge to dig in the yard or its environs. If you're one of these unfortunates, please dig carefully. You see, many utilities, such as gas, water, telephone and electricity, are buried underground now. There's a very real danger that you may dig into a buried underground power line while burrowing in your yard, or along a roadside. Such an event could spoil your entire day and maybe the rest of your life.

Seriously, we urge you to be very careful when getting ready to dig. Unless you are absolutely sure there are no underground pipes or cables around, call first. Not to be terribly picky, but the law actually requires you to be sure you aren't going to have what's known as a "dig-in." The law is not intended to keep you from planting a tree or digging a hole for a new basement. Its main purpose is to assign finan-

cial responsibility, and it states that the one who digs into a utility line is the one who's going to pay for any damage and repairs that such a dig-in causes. If that won't motivate you to pick up the phone and dial the toll-free number, nothing will.

Fortunately, there are two easy ways to avoid such problems, and, as mentioned, both involve simple phone calls. Several of the electric cooperatives in Illinois are members of JULIE, or Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators.

JULIE is a not-for-profit corporation that provides contractors, excavators, homeowners

and others "who may be disturbing the earth,"

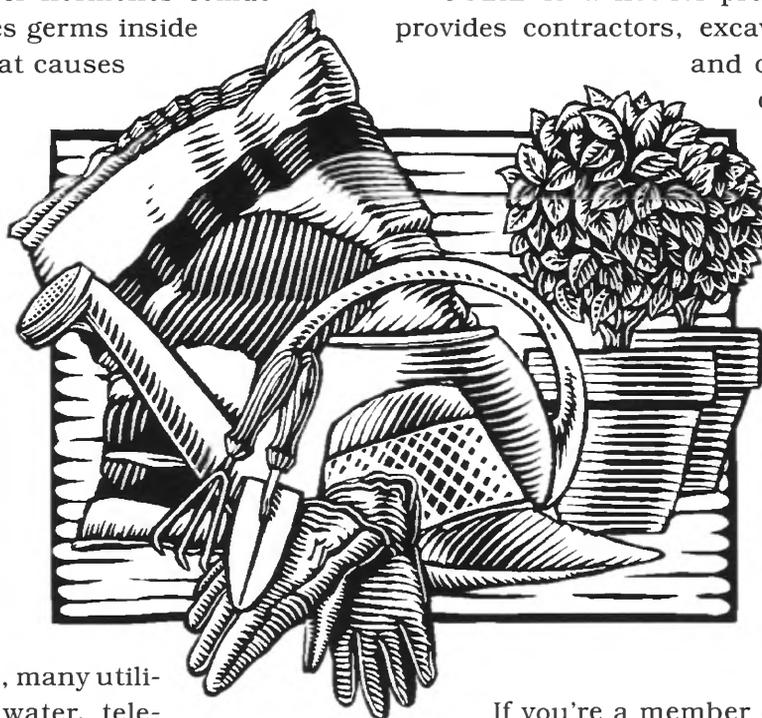
as they put it, with a free locating service through a toll-free phone call.

Also known as the "Illinois One Call System," JULIE was formed in 1974 by owners and operators of underground utility facilities to reduce damage to their pipes, cables and wires.

If you're a member of one of the co-ops served by JULIE, call (800) 892-0123, at least two days before the urge to dig overpowers you.

JULIE co-ops in Illinois are: Jo-Carroll Electric, Elizabeth; Corn Belt Electric, Bloomington; Shelby Electric, Shelbyville; Coles-Moultrie Electric, Mattoon; Southwestern Electric, Greenville; Clinton County Electric, Breese; Tri-County Electric, Mt. Vernon; and Monroe County Electric; Waterloo.

If you're a member of any of the other electric co-ops, you'll need to call their office before digging, and they'll send someone out to locate any of their lines. Be sure to allow them some time. They'll be glad to help you, and they'll appreciate your thoughtfulness.





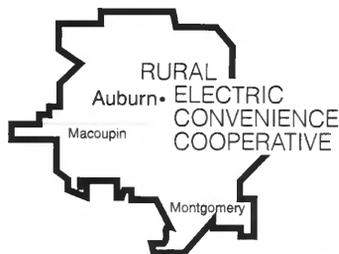
DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN

As the planting season winds down, 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 planting seasons, 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



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.
President/CEO: Del L. England

RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

217-438-6197

AUBURN, ILLINOIS

Six students attend Rural Electric Youth Day

High school students from across Illinois met their state legislators in Springfield during "Illinois Electric and Telephone Cooperatives Youth Day" on Wednesday, April 22. Six area students representing Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative met with Senator Larry Bomke, Representative Gwenn Klingler and Representative Tom Ryder at the State Capitol. Pictured are, from left, Sen. Bomke, Melissa Skinner, Loami; Bobbi Lettimore, Waverly; Courtney Brehm, New Berlin; Erin Tallon, Virden; Rep. Klingler; Chaperone Dana Smith, RECC; Travis Matthews, Waggoner; Rep. Ryder; and Megan Garrett, Harvel.



Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative was represented by six outstanding students at the Illinois Rural Electric and Telephone Cooperatives Youth Day program on April 22 in Springfield. Over 200 high schoolers from electric and telephone co-ops around the state enjoyed the daylong program, touring the Capitol and other historic sites and meeting with their state legislators. The purpose of Youth Day is to show young leaders their government in action and educate them about the role of cooperatives in their rural communities.

Attending the Youth Day program from our area were Courtney Brehm, New Berlin (New Berlin H.S.); Megan Garrett, Harvel (Lincolnwood H.S.); Bobbi Lettimore, Waverly (Waverly H.S.); Travis Matthews, Waggoner (Lincolnwood H.S.); Melissa Skinner, Loami (Glenwood H.S.); and Erin Tallon, Virden (Hickory Hills Academy).

At the Capitol, the group saw the state Sen-

ate and House of Representatives' meeting chambers and some of the hearings rooms used by legislative committees. They also toured the Illinois Supreme Court, the Governor's Executive Mansion, and the Old State Capitol.

RECC's students also had the opportunity to interview for a chance to attend the annual Youth To Washington Tour in June. This fun-filled week brings over 1,000 young people to the nation's capital to see many of the historic sites of our country. Winners of the expense-paid trip were Travis Matthews of Waggoner and Melissa Skinner of Loami. Erin Tallon of Virden was selected as the alternate for the trip.

Congratulations to these fine students for their interest in the rural electric cooperative program and our democratic government. We also thank them for sharing their time with us, and wish them all the best in their schooling and beyond.

Consolidation vote will be at Annual Meeting June 11

Members will be asked to decide whether the proposed consolidation of Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative and Menard Electric Cooperative will take place, in a vote held at RECC's Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 11. The meeting will be held at Lincolnwood High School in Raymond at 7 p.m., with a pork BBQ supper served from 5 to 6:45 p.m.

Menard Electric's members are also voting on the consolidation, at their Annual Meeting on June 6. At least two-thirds of the votes at each co-op must be in favor of consolidation for the proposal to be approved. If that happens, a new organization called Prairieland Service Cooperative would be created on Jan. 1, 1999. The counting of votes for both cooperatives will take place Saturday, June 13 at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives office in Springfield, and the results made public.

Members may vote in person or by proxy, with each registered member at the meeting able to cast one proxy vote in addition to their own. Proxy cards are printed on the back cover of the Annual Meeting Notice booklet which has been mailed to all members. If you cannot attend the Annual Meeting and wish to have your vote cast by proxy, you must sign the proxy card and give it to a member who will be at the meeting. On registering and presenting your proxy card, they will be given two ballot packets to use for any votes taken at the meeting.

The Boards of RECC and Menard Electric have spent many months discussing and plan-

ning this consolidation proposal, and they believe it is in the best interests of their memberships to combine the two organizations. Area information meetings were held, and letters and informational brochures sent to all members regarding the consolidation proposal. Anyone with a specific question is welcome to discuss it with their local director, or call the co-op office. We also encourage all members to attend their Annual Meeting if possible, and cast their vote on this vitally important issue!

Advantages of consolidation

The creation of Prairieland Service Cooperative, by consolidating Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative and Menard Electric Cooperative, will offer many advantages for our members. These include:

- **Better efficiency**
(by eliminating duplication of services)
- **Continued local service**
(offices and line crews would be maintained at both Auburn and Petersburg)
- **Stronger financial and marketing base**
- **Operating cost savings**
(estimated \$2.7-\$5 million over first eight years)
- **Better access to new technologies**
- **Ability to offer more and expanded services to our members and rural communities**

Soyland heating equipment rebates end June 30

The deadline is near for members to receive the full rebate amounts available for new electric heating equipment. Soyland Power Cooperative, which offers part of the rebates now being paid, will eliminate their heating equipment rebates as of June 30, 1998. All rebate applications must be received at our office by noon on June 30 to get the Soyland rebates.

RECC will continue its rebates for electric heating systems, as well as for electric water heaters, ranges and clothes dryers. We think the safety, reliability and efficiency of electric heating and appliances is unmatched, and our rebates help make them even easier to afford.

The rebates in effect *until June 30* are:

	RECC rebate	Soyland rebate	Total rebate
Geothermal systems	\$250/ton	\$125/ton	\$375/ton
Air source heat pumps (with electric back-up)	\$200/ton	\$125/ton	\$325/ton
Resistance electric heat (permanently installed)	\$30/kw	\$30/kw (5 kw min.)	\$60/kw (5 kw min.)

As June rolls around, we need to think safety

June is Safety Month, and while we should practice safety the year around, we might be wise to use the month to recommit ourselves to safe practices in and around the home, much as we use the beginning of a new year to work on self-improvement.

Let us hope we are more successful with safety than with New Year's resolutions.

While we tend to deal with electrical safety most often on this page, it is important to review all kinds of home safety occasionally, and these tips are intended to remind you of the many hazards in the modern household. You may be able to think of more.

Do you have smoke detectors? If not, run out and get some. They're your first line of defense in saving you and your family from fire, and they're very inexpensive. Make it a point to check your batteries twice a year, when you change your clocks back and forth for daylight-saving time.

While not very common, carbon monoxide detectors are being installed in more and more homes, and you should get one if you have any fuel-burning appliances. They are more important now than they were in the past, because homes tend to be tighter, and the natural ventilation that used to provide air exchanges is no longer there.

Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupters, or GFCIs, are also an important part of home safety. Like smoke detectors, they are recognized as being so important that they're now required by law in new construction, in kitchens, bathrooms and for outdoor electrical outlets. Unfortunately, they're uncommon in even fairly new homes, and they offer enough protection that you might want to talk to an electrician about having some put in your home. They're

intended to protect you from shock or electrocution if you come in contact with a faulty circuit or appliance.

There are some on the market that can be used with existing wiring, and you'd be wise to invest in some of them until you can get your home wired. Some extension cords intended for outdoor use have them built into one end, and you can buy plug-in units to use in kitchen and bathroom receptacles.

Be sure to have an emergency evacuation plan, so all family members can escape in the event of a fire. Have a designated place to meet outside, so nobody goes back in to look for someone who may be perfectly safe but out of view. Practice your plan, especially if you have children.

It's a good idea to have fire extinguishers where you can get at them, and near an exit. If firefighting efforts fail, it's important to be able to get away from smoke and flames. A multipurpose dry chemical ABC extinguisher is best for general home use.

Keep a well-stocked first-aid kit handy, and be sure the contents are up-to-date, since some medications have expiration dates. Make sure family members know how to use the kit. First aid kits should be checked periodically for expiration dates and to restock those items which are missing from prior use.

It's important to get help quickly in an emergency, and one good way to do that is to have a list of emergency telephone numbers posted near every phone in your home. If you have children, teach them to dial emergency numbers. And stress that they should not dial emergency numbers unless there's a real emergency!

While it's nearly impossible, make a special effort to keep flashlights handy, and try to

keep the batteries current. You may want to change them out when you check your smoke detector batteries. It's a good idea to have at least one flashlight for each bedroom. Since kids tend to find flashlights terribly fascinating, get toy ones for them, and tell them they can use them any way they want to, but that the real flashlights are off limits. That doesn't always work, but it's worth a try.

Know how to shut off all the energy sources coming into your home. Put a tag on the valves for gas, oil, water and electricity, and know how to shut them off safely. Some valves take a special wrench, and it's a good idea to have one taped to the pipe leading to the house, or kept in a similarly handy location. Know how to use them.

An emergency kit is essential in Illinois homes, because of the danger, nearly any time of the year, that the weather will do something very unpleasant. Tornadoes can strike at any time, and lesser windstorms can also cause prolonged power outages. Winter storms can do the same thing, and cold weather may be life-threatening. And there's always the possibility, however remote, of a flood or earthquake.

Your emergency kit should include a battery-powered radio (keep fresh batteries, too), a flashlight, clothing and bedding, non-perishable food that needs minimal preparation, containers of water and a first-aid kit. During winter time, you may want to have a portable space heater that burns kerosene, butane or propane, just to be on the safe side.

We're sure you can think of more, but the main thing is to get started planning now — don't wait for New Year's day!



DO YOU KNOW THE 10-FOOT RULE?

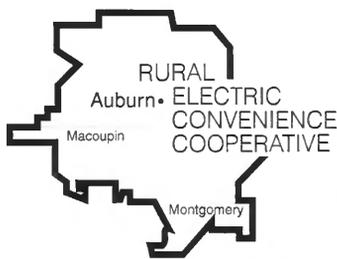
No, it's not a new dance step, and it's not a giant measuring stick.

The rule refers to the distance extending ten feet in every direction from any power line. It's the distance you should observe when you're working outdoors with equipment or machinery, such as a crane, forklift, backhoe, dump truck, TV antenna, drilling rig or block loader.

So play it safe, and remind your co-workers and neighbors to practice the "10-foot rule" too.



*A safety message
from your electric
cooperative*



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.
President/CEO: Del L. England

RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

217-438-6197

AUBURN, ILLINOIS

Get ready now for crop drying

Don't wait until you start harvesting this fall to find out if your crop dryer is going to operate properly. Take a few minutes now and run through the following checklist. It may save you hours or even days of harvest delay.

- Inspect all wiring and panels for worn insulation, loose connections and worn-out circuit breakers. Also, check to be sure grounding wires are properly connected and not broken.
- Make sure all guards, shields and overcurrent devices are properly installed and secured.
- Check for worn bearings, pulleys, gear boxes, belts, shafts, etc. Pay particular attention to excess play in motor bearings. Bad bearings can ruin a motor.
- Lubricate all equipment before you start it. If you are not sure of where to lubricate or what type of lubrication to use, consult your equipment dealer.
- Test it. Run through a complete drying cycle to see that all timers and switches operate properly. Let the motors run for several minutes to heat and distribute the new lubricant. Start the dryer at least twice to be sure the starting capacitors perform properly.
- Don't forget to check over any gas-fired equipment or tractors used in conjunction with the dryer.

Adding Load?

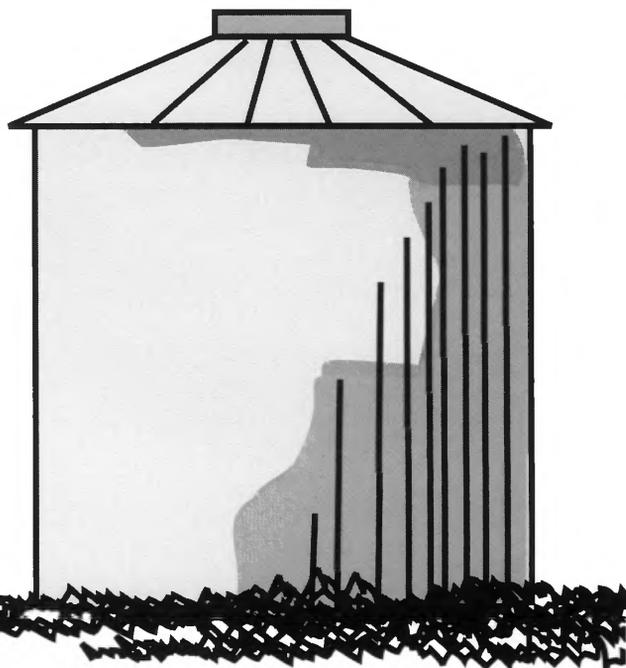
If you're adding motors or installing larger motors on your drying system, be sure to notify RECC to make sure you have adequate electrical capacity to handle the additional load. Your entire system must be sized correctly, from the transformer and service wire through your meter wiring, main panel and feeder circuits.

When you add or move facilities it's also a good time to assess the safety of your wiring layout. Is there adequate clearance under all

overhead wires for trucks, farm implements and grain augers? The National Electrical Code also requires minimum clearances vertically and horizontally from high-voltage overhead electric lines for safe movement of augers and equipment.

RECC Grain Drying Rate

Don't forget about our special off-peak rate for on-farm grain drying and processing! From Sept. 16 to May 31, electric energy is just 4¢ per kilowatt hour under this rate, while the remainder of the year the cost is the same as the normal single-phase or three-phase rate. The lower cost is specifically for grain drying and related equipment, so if your dryer is on the same service with a house, barn or other loads, a submeter is required for the grain dryer. Call our office for an analysis of your potential savings and any meter installation cost estimates.



ICare offers peace of mind for you and your loved ones



Area residents who want to live in their own home, but worry about getting help when it's needed, now have Interactive Care (ICare) to help out. The ICare console and monthly monitoring service bring added security throughout the house, with a remote pendant that triggers a call to trained professionals. They immediately have two-way voice communications to the home, and can summon a relative, neighbor or emergency response team if needed.

Optional features like pill reminders and activity monitors can make ICare even more valuable. Call Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative to find out more about the Interactive Care program, or ask for a free demonstration. You or a loved one can enjoy the privacy of living at home with the security of the ICare emergency response center at your fingertips!

Monthly monitoring fee (RECC members) — \$20.00

Monthly monitoring fee (non-members) — \$24.00

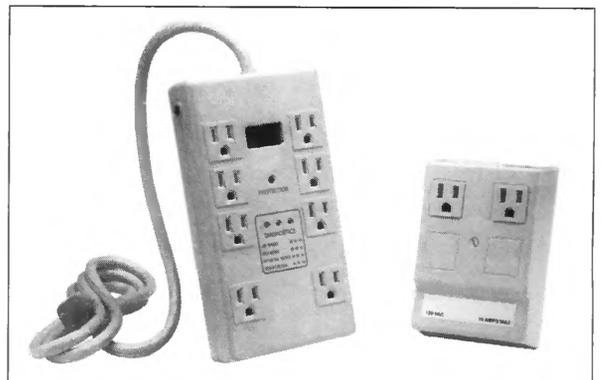
Don't let lightning ruin your summer!

Fierce thunderstorms rolled across central Illinois this spring, spreading lightning bolts across the skies and sometimes into members' electric lines. Lightning still threatens in late summer, along with other circumstances that can send high-voltage surges through the lines. RECC's surge suppressor lease program can give you protection from these voltage surges and spikes, with their resulting cost and inconvenience! Our two-part program provides you whole-house protection for major appliances plus individual plug-in strips for sensitive electronic equipment.

For just \$4.95 a month, we'll install a high-energy surge suppressor at your meter socket or your house's main electric service. It's warranty covers any damage to electro-mechanical equipment caused by an electrical surge that passes through the protective device.

You also get a choice of indoor plug-in strips to protect your TV, VCR, stereo, telephone or answering machine, computer system or other valuable electronics. The plug-in strips include either a telephone line connection or television coax cable connection, to prevent surges from entering through phone, cable, or antenna wires. These are sources people often forget that can carry damaging spikes into the home's electronic devices.

Call RECC for more information, and see how easy it is to protect your home. Our surge suppressor lease program costs only pennies a day, and can save you thousands!



Call (800) 245-7322

Fried appliances

Why you need surge protection for your home

Some things are good fried. Others are not. Household appliances are a case in point. "What is a fried appliance?" you ask. It's one that has been zapped by a power surge.

If you're like most of us, you have a fair amount of money invested in computers, TVs, stereos, refrigerators, washers, clothes dryers and more. But are you protecting your equipment from power surges?

Years ago, clocks and the like were sturdy and robust. If the power went off, they just quit, and resumed when the power came back on. How much time was "missing" on your electric clock told you how long an outage had lasted. Momentary glitches, for the most part, went unnoticed.

But today's electronics and appliances are very sensitive — digital clocks, for example, will stop at the slightest provocation, and won't restart until you reset them.

And remember that *anything* you plug in can be damaged or destroyed by a power surge. A power surge is a brief, unpredictable increase in voltage that can enter your home through the power, telephone or cable television lines.

Your electric co-op is always working to maintain a high-quality supply of power to your home. However, there are several things that can cause power surges in the very best of electric utility systems. The most common one is lightning, but there are other

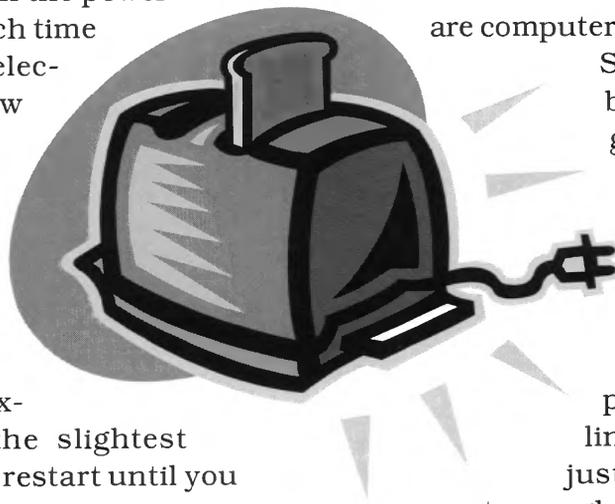
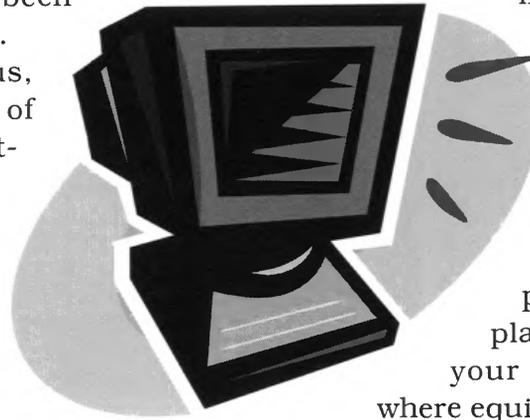
causes, too. These include an object coming in contact with a power line as well as electric-powered equipment suddenly starting or taking extra power. If you have an appliance that causes lights to dim every time the motor starts, you've got power quality problems in your home.

Good surge protection puts up guards in several places: where electricity enters your home; inside your home where equipment is connected to electricity through outlets; on your incoming phone lines; and on your television lead-in. Two of the most often damaged items are computer modems and televisions.

Sometimes this is caused by the lack of a common ground for telephone, cable TV and electrical services. Also, computer modems and televisions are often left unprotected from surges coming through phone lines and cable lines. Surge protection at just the electrical outlet is not enough.

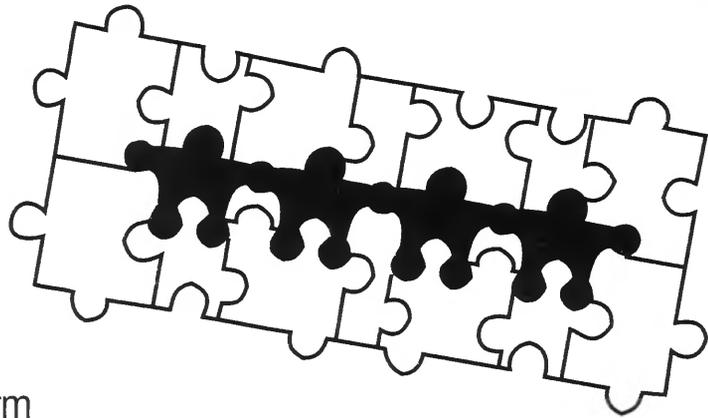
A meter-based surge protector guards your home from power surges at the electrical service entrance. Plug-in devices for surge protection inside the home protect your equipment at the outlet stage, and at your telephone and antenna or cable TV lead-in.

Don't wait for a power surge to hit your home. Call your electric co-op today for information about power surge protection — they will be happy to help.



One reason they're called cooperatives

When weather is severe —from ice storms to tornadoes — your cooperative has assistance at the ready. Last year, as early as Halloween, an ice storm caused severe damage in the northern part of the state. How reassuring to know help was only a phone call away.



All 26 of Illinois' electric cooperatives participate in an emergency response program. When help is needed, available line crews from cooperatives across the state are dispatched to the trouble spots. Working together in perilous conditions, they combat the obstacles to restore electricity.

We salute the work of the cooperative employees — men and women who are our neighbors — who give meaning to the word *reliability*.

We get our power from you.

Electric Cooperatives of Illinois

Celebrating National Cooperative Month in October

Affirmative action, equal opportunity employers



RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

AUBURN, ILLINOIS
217-438-6197

Rural Highlights

Board of Directors: Jim Ayers, John Beatty, Ted Dowson, Curtis Hays, Lee Marten,
Melvin Repscher, David White, and Lyle Yeaman.

President/CEO: Del L. England

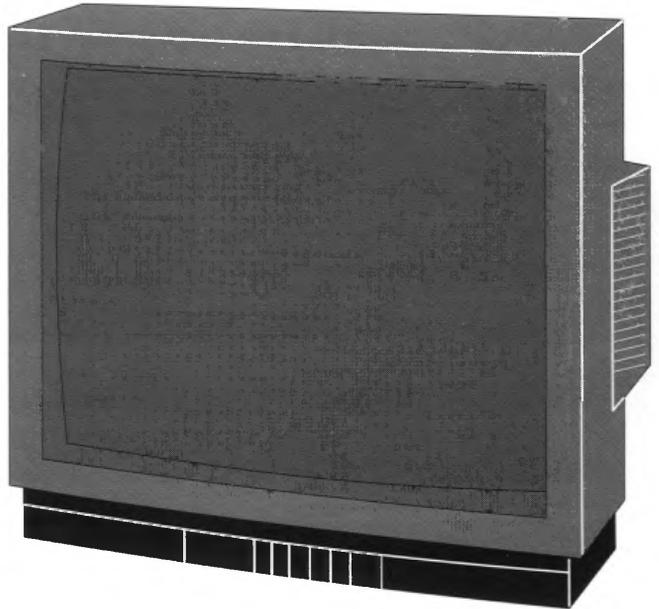
A Touchstone Energy™ Partner 

Protect that big-screen TV!

You've spent hundreds of dollars (or even more) on that great big-screen TV, a new VCR, maybe even a surround-sound system or digital video disk player. You're ready for the World Series Game 7, that big NFL Sunday game, your favorite movie just out on video. What if a sudden power surge hits your expensive equipment just as you get settled in for an evening of enjoyment?

It can happen any time...a lightning strike near your home, a tree falling across the electric line down the road, even your own motors starting or stopping. Because today's electronics are more sensitive to voltage blips and electrical "noise" on the lines, they may be damaged by surges that you aren't even aware of. You can protect your valuable electronic devices and appliances with RECC's HomeGuard surge suppressor lease program. This two-stage protection program gives you whole-house coverage from high-energy surges like lightning, and individual plug-in strips for sensitive electronic devices like TVs, VCRs and computers.

For just \$4.95 a month, you get a utility-grade surge suppressor installed at your meter or main electrical entrance, plus one plug-in strip for inside your home. Plug strips can include a connection for a cable TV line or telephone line, since those cables can also carry surges to your TV or computer. If you have more than one device to protect in the home, additional plug strips can be purchased. The



protection devices carry a warranty that will pay for the replacement cost of any protected equipment that is damaged by a surge passing through the surge protector.

It was a rough summer for many RECC members whose homes and equipment were hit by lightning. Several have installed RECC's HomeGuard surge protection after sustaining damage, but isn't it a better idea to protect yourself *before* you experience a problem? Call our office for more details on the HomeGuard lease program, toll-free at (800) 245-7322.

A Touchstone EnergySM Partner

The power of human connections



Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative is your Touchstone Energy partner
... committed to quality, service, innovation and community involvement.

Moonlight is nice —



but you can depend on a rental security light

You don't have to depend on the uncertain light of the silvery moon when you install a rental security light at your home, farm or business. For a few dollars a month, your property can be bathed in bright light. Studies have shown that outdoor lighting reduces the chance of burglary and vandalism.

A moonlit night is great, but for peace of mind, contact Rural Electric Convenience and have one of the following high pressure sodium security lights installed.

- 100-watt HPS — \$7 per month
- 250-watt HPS — \$9 per month

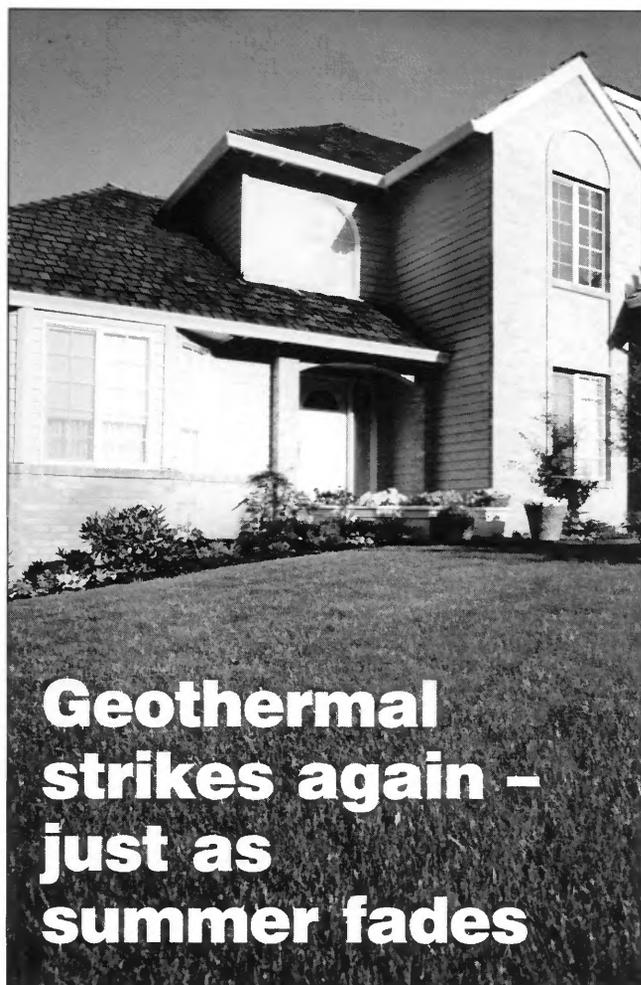
Call your cooperative at (800) 245-7322 for more details.

Three-phase upgrade at Sunset Lake

RECC's crews have been working this summer to replace the single-phase circuit feeding the north entrance to Sunset Lake in Macoupin County with a three-phase line. Manager of Operations and Maintenance Lou Delaby says the upgrade will "Provide better reliability as this area grows, and help us in balancing the loads on our distribution system."

Besides providing three phase wires into the area instead of the original one phase, the new wire is also heavier and stronger than the old. RECC serves about 300 homes around Sunset Lake, with many new homes and upgrades being completed in recent years. The new line will assure plenty of power for present and future residents of the area, says Lou. Pictured are journeymen linemen Curt Nichelson (in bucket truck) and Walt Wallace, stringing the new aluminum wires along the north entrance road.





Geothermal strikes again - just as summer fades

Mother Nature is a perplexing creature. She hits us with hot weather, cold weather, dry weather and rainy weather, and sometimes it seems that we're getting them all at once.

But she prepares her brood for weather by providing them with ways to get out of the worst she throws at them. For many of our furry little friends, Ma Nature gives them the wisdom to dig a burrow, or to move into someone else's. Hundreds, if not thousands, of species winter underground, and many also escape the summer's worst heat by finding a subterranean snug place, where the temperature's about the same the year around.

We can do that too, and we don't have to go down there where it's dank and dark and musty. We can have a geothermal heating-and-cooling system installed in our homes.

As we've said here many times, a geothermal system is an all-in-one heating, cooling and water-heating system, and it will provide you with definite benefits through all the seasons.

A geothermal heating-and-cooling system can cool your home more efficiently than a regular air conditioner or heat pump, and it can provide you with heat for less money than natural gas. That's right: Geothermal gives you cheaper heat than natural gas. Electric co-ops don't discuss that fact very much because in many places, it's really a moot point. Most co-op members don't have natural gas, and the prospects of them getting it any

time soon are slim, except in those areas where electric co-ops are branching out into the natural gas business!

If you heat with propane, remember that geothermal can heat and cool for less than you can perform those chores with propane.

And when you're about to replace that old propane furnace that's limped through the last couple of winters, remember the horrendous price spikes of just a few years ago, when your supplier was forced - because of a shortage - to triple his prices, just as cool weather set in.

That situation has improved for some, since some electric co-ops have gotten into the propane business to help insulate their members from such practices.

Electricity rates in Illinois have been steady for some 15 years now, and while they've been higher than your co-op friends like, they are coming down. That's another thing to consider when you set out to replace that old furnace.

To refresh your memory, a geothermal system is really just a heat pump, but it's like a heat pump on steroids. A heat pump is sort of a reversible air conditioner, bringing cool air into your home in the summer, and bringing in warm air in the winter. You control what it does with your wall-mounted thermostat.

But if a heat pump has a weakness, it's that it begins to lose its "oomph" in the wintertime about the same time most of us do. When the mercury drops to about 10 degrees F., your heat pump's efficiency drops, leaving you hunting supplemental heat.

A geothermal unit is different. It uses a liquid-filled buried loop that circulates underground much like those burrowing little critters we were discussing earlier. It works with a medium that's about 55 degrees F., the year around.

So while an air conditioner or heat pump has to work hard to cool 90-degree air in the summer, your geothermal unit is breezing along with its 55-degree medium, blowing cool air into your home. That's a lot easier than working with the normal outside air temperature. And when it's cooling, it's also transferring heat into a water-heater connection, to help you save about half the cost of that convenience.

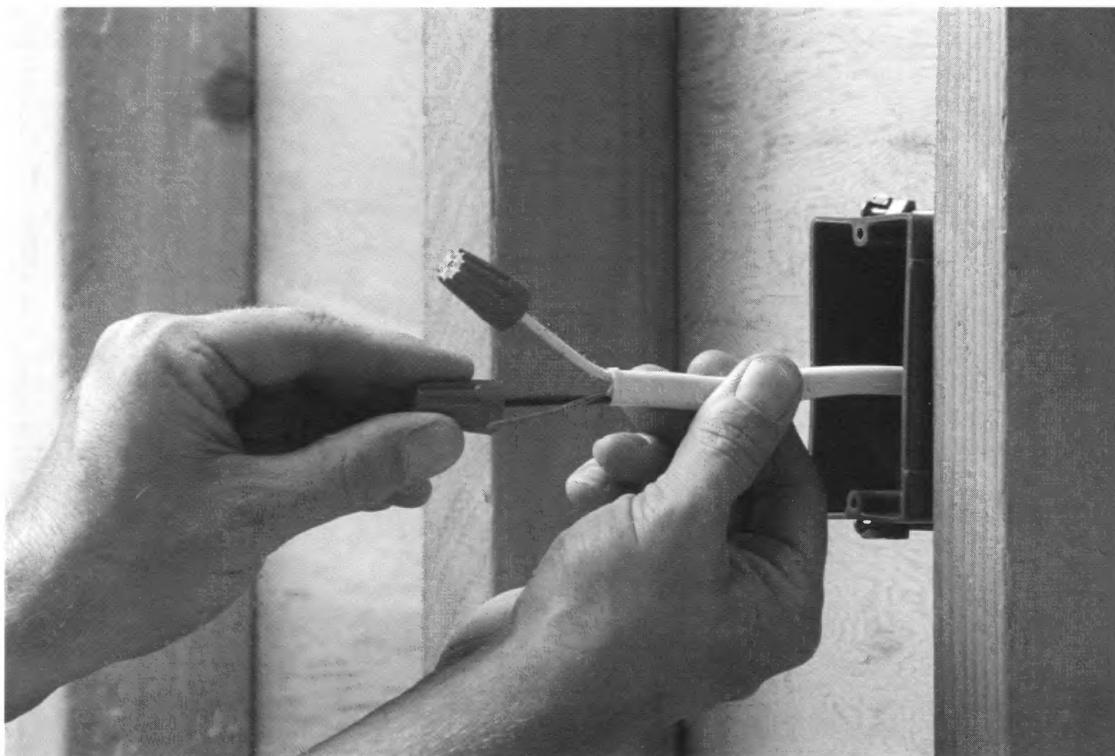
And while the average heat pump struggles to heat zero-degree air in the winter, your geothermal unit is breezing along with its 55-degree medium, taking warmth out of the ground and blowing it into your home. It's a system that can't be beat.

If there's a disadvantage to geothermal, it's that the initial cost can be steep. Those buried loops are often sunk into trenches or wells, and digging those can get expensive. Often, the grid can be sunk into a good-sized pond, since you're really just looking for a hefty heat sink.

But whatever the case, geothermal warrants very careful consideration, because its savings are so great. And it's available wherever there's an electric line.

Be sure to look into geothermal, especially if you're thinking of building a new home or replacing an old furnace. The difference is well worth the trouble, and your friends at your local co-op will be happy to help you make the right decision.

Wiring problem warnings



You can often spot wiring problems if you watch for the following signals. If they occur have a qualified electrician check the wiring.

- Do fuses blow or breakers often trip?
- Do lights dim or does the TV picture shrink when appliances switch on?
- Is the switch box warm to the touch?
- Do you have trouble with faltering motors?
- Have you added new appliances?

Only you can prevent house fires

Check the circuit panel for signs of overheating — discoloration and melting of insulation. Tightening screws in the fuse box can prevent flickering and excessive heating of terminals.

Make sure appliance cords are kept in good condition. If an appliance makes a funny noise, does not work, or has a burnt smell — unplug it immediately. Malfunctioning appliances at the very least increase your electric bill, at the worst they can cause a fire.

Be extremely careful with all portable heaters. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Give someone you love a fire extinguisher for Christmas and buy one for yourself.



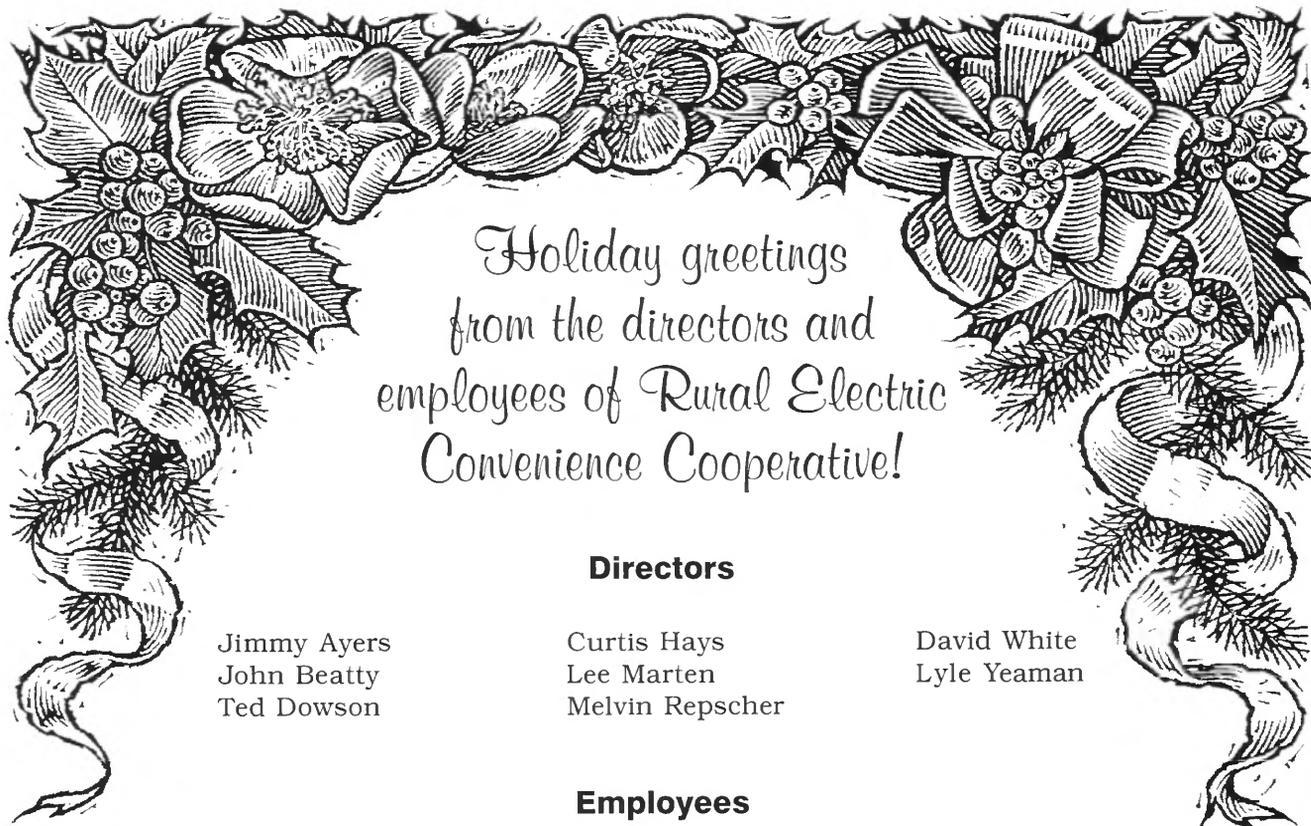
RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

AUBURN, ILLINOIS
217-438-6197

Rural Highlights

Board of Directors: Jim Ayers, John Beatty, Ted Dowson, Curtis Hays, Lee Marten, Melvin Repscher, David White, and Lyle Yeaman.
President/CEO: Del L. England

A Touchstone Energy™ Partner



*Holiday greetings
from the directors and
employees of Rural Electric
Convenience Cooperative!*

Directors

Jimmy Ayers
John Beatty
Ted Dowson

Curtis Hays
Lee Marten
Melvin Repscher

David White
Lyle Yeaman

Employees

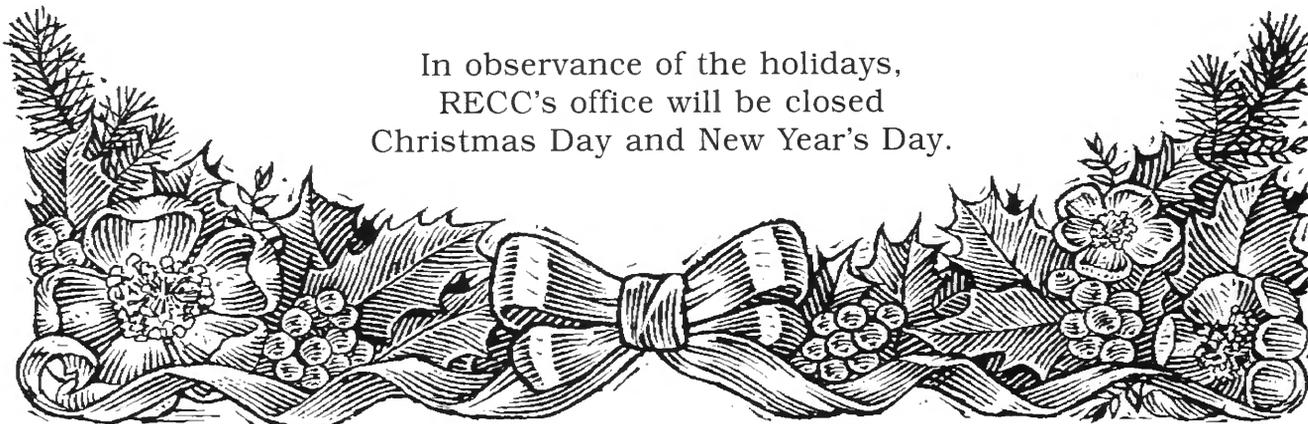
Del England,
President/CEO
Clark Bowman
Bill Carter
Jeanette Clark
Craig Costello
Lou Delaby

Martha Fielding
Curt Fishburn
Dave Flynn
Dean Fuchs
Carol Funk
Bob Garner
Bill Hart

Tim Hemberger
Martin Hinton
Tom Jones
Jeff Lancaster
John Munchalfen
Curt Nichelson
Randy Olson

Joan Otten
Jim Psaute
Dana Smith
Stefan Spoorer
Walt Wallace
Ken Williamson

In observance of the holidays,
RECC's office will be closed
Christmas Day and New Year's Day.



Energy Star TVs and VCRs now available

TVs and VCRs have become part of the growing list of Energy Star®-labeled products that includes office equipment, household appliances and heating and cooling systems. Energy Star®, the symbol for energy efficiency, is a product label created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department Of Energy to help consumers identify products that save money and protect the environment by saving energy.

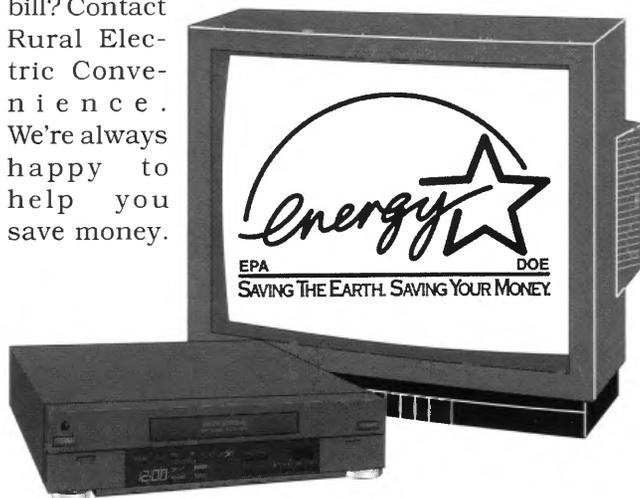
A total of 10 manufacturers offer Energy Star® TVs and VCRs; JVC, LG Electronics (Goldstar), Matsushita (National, Panasonic, Quasar, Technics), Philips (Magnavox), Samsung, Sanyo, Sharp, Sony, Thomson (GE, RCA, Proscan) and Toshiba.

The availability of energy-efficient TVs and VCRs is important because they use energy even when turned off. Some of that energy is used to power features like remote controls and channel memory, but much of it is wasted. Americans spend about \$3.5 billion each year to power their TVs and VCRs. Of this amount, about \$1 billion is used to power them when they are switched off.

According to DOE, TVs and VCRs with the Energy Star® label typically have the same or better performance, features, reliability and price as conventional models but save money and the

environment by using less energy. An Energy Star®-labeled TV consumes up to 75 percent less energy than the average TV when switched off, while a VCR consumes up to 70 percent less energy than the average VCR when switched off.

The average annual household energy bill in the United States is \$1,300. By choosing Energy Star® compliant equipment when purchasing appliances and electronics, the average household can cut its energy bill by as much as 30 percent. For more information: call toll-free (888) STAR-YES or (888) 782-7937. Would you like more information on cutting your home energy bill? Contact Rural Electric Conve
n i e n c e .
We're always happy to help you save money.



Give a gift of energy

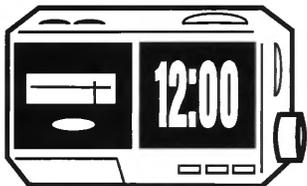
It's easy to give, fits the decor of any home and comes in whatever size you choose. An electric energy certificate from RECC may be exactly the gift you need for a friend or family member. Just pay the amount you want to give toward another member's electric account, and you'll get a gift certificate that can be given or mailed to the recipient, announcing your energy gift. Their bill will automatically be credited for the amount.

Other gift ideas include our security light rental plan, surge protector lease, and the reverse osmosis water filter system. Call our office for more details on any of these programs!



Buying someone a new appliance for Christmas?

Make sure it has a battery backup for the digital clock. That way, that special someone won't have to reset it after a split-second interruption of the power supply.



Take precautions when using supplemental heaters

As we move into fall, when the weather often changes from somewhat warm to downright chilly and back again, many of us are faced with the choice of freezing or turning on the furnace. Often, because it's really not that cold, we're reluctant to turn up the thermostat and incur the costs of being warm all through the house.

Often, it's not necessary. Sometimes a carefully placed portable supplemental space heater will provide just the needed additional warmth, without breaking the bank. So if you're in the kitchen enjoying the thrill of washing dishes and begin to feel a trifle chilly, all you need to do is bring in a little space heater.

Afterward, if you want to watch TV in the family room, you can pick up your little heater and move it there to create your own cozy little nook.

Naturally, your electric co-op hopes you'll use a portable electric heater because, overall, they're safer and more convenient than the other kinds. Even so, you must be careful with them. While they don't have an open flame, they do have hot surfaces.

And while they don't rely on volatile liquid or gas fuels that may spill or get out of control, they do use electricity, which packs considerable punch when not used properly.

One of their major advantages, though, is that they do not give off carbon monoxide, and they don't require venting to make them safe.

Be sure to use your portable electric heater only for temporary heating of limited space only.

Be sure not to place them in heavily traveled areas, or in places where children may touch them. Don't use an extension cord with an electric heater if you can possibly avoid it. Most cords you'll find around the home aren't adequate.

Don't conceal the cord under a rug to get it out of sight or prevent tripping. Extension cords wear quickly under a rug, and can become a shock or fire hazard before you know it.

While most portable space heaters built in the last few years have good, solid bases to prevent tipping, older ones may not, and you need to be very careful with them. Newer models also have built-in switches to shut them off automatically if they tip over, and that's a desirable safety feature.

If you decide to use a portable kerosene heater, keep in mind that you need to provide adequate ventilation, which usually means cracking a window to let in fresh air and the cold. Use only 1K kerosene, and no other kind of fuel. Adjust the burner to the manufacturer's specifications, and don't refuel a hot heater. Many recommend that you refuel kerosene heaters outdoors.

It's tempting to bring in gas camping heaters and the like, and that's downright unsafe. In addition to the dangers of contact burns, the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning is as great as it is with kerosene heaters, and there's also the problem of tipping.

If you plan to use any supplemental heater besides electric ones, you'd be wise to buy a carbon monoxide detector in addition to your smoke detector, and make sure both are properly installed and working.

No matter what kind of portable heater you use, there are some basic safety precautions YOU should take to avoid becoming a statistic.

First, you should keep children and pets away from portable heaters, and avoid using them overnight in a room where you're sleeping.

Keep heaters at least three feet away from bedding, drapes, furniture and other combustibles, and always follow the manufacturer's instructions in installing, operating, and maintaining your heater.

Properly used, portable space heaters can help you stay comfortable while keeping your costs within reason. If you have questions about the safe use of portable electric heaters, contact your friends at your local co-op. They'll be glad to help.

