



On call in
Good
weather...
and **BAD.**

When winter winds give us their worst, the line crews at your electric cooperative are on call 24 hours daily to make sure that you have prompt electricity if an outage should occur.

When the lights go out in the middle of the night, it's reassuring to know that the line crews at your electrical cooperative are there. With little notice they'll be on the scene, working their hardest to get the power back on and keep it flowing. Cooperative line crews brave some of nature's worst elements, often off the road in deep snow or 40 feet off the ground working the overhead lines. Safety must be foremost in their minds at all times.

Keeping the electricity flowing is dangerous work. . . in good weather and bad. Members, like you, can count on cooperative linemen to get the job done . . . and keep the power flowing.





RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

AUBURN, ILLINOIS
217-438-6197

Rural Highlights

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

A Touchstone Energy Partner 

Your electric co-op does not endorse insurance companies

Illinois Country Living readers recognize that this magazine occasionally carries advertising material from insurance companies. Several of these companies are longtime advertisers in the magazine.

The magazine staff makes every effort to determine the legitimacy of these companies, but none of them have the endorsement of your member-cooperative or the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC), the organization that publishes this magazine.

We would like to inform Illinois Country Living readers about one insurance company that has confused some of our readers in the past. For many years, Reserve National Insurance has used direct mail, telephone and in-person direct marketing to rural Illinoisans, many of them electric cooperative members. In past marketing efforts they imply that they have an affiliation with the electric cooperatives. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the AIEC have requested that the



company stop making these statements.

Their envelope return address says: A National Association of Rural Co-Operative Members, Oklahoma City, OK. The envelope also says: "ATTENTION - RURAL CO-OPERATIVE MEMBERS NOW QUALIFY FOR A GROUP HOSPITALIZATION PLAN THAT PAYS OUTPATIENT EXPENSES. IMMEDIATE REPLY REQUESTED." Inside

there is a questionnaire form with the heading: "RURAL CO-OPERATIVE MEMBERS QUESTIONNAIRE." Only in the fine print at the bottom do they state: "This plan is independent of, and not affiliated, associated, or endorsed by any national electric association or any local Farmers, Electric, Telephone or other rural co-operative."

We want to make it perfectly clear that Rural Electric Convenience Coop. does not endorse Reserve National Insurance, nor is there any connection with the company and its insurance products.

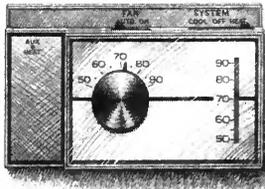
Thinking about a new water heater?

Is your old water heater keeping you awake at night, worrying about it springing a leak or becoming a "no-hot-water-heater"? Well, you can rest easy if you install a new, efficient electric water heater, and RECC can make it easy on your pocketbook! We offer rebates on new electric water heaters installed on the co-op's lines, and we even sell two brands for your convenience.

The Vanguard water heater, made by Rheem, has good efficiency and a 6-year warranty on the tank. It sells for \$234.71 with the pressure relief valve, less a \$50 rebate if you're replacing another electric water heater. If you're replacing a gas water heater, or building a new home, the Vanguard price is just \$1.00!

For maximum efficiency and peace of mind, we also offer the Marathon water heater with a tough polyethylene plastic tank and outer shell. The Marathon is guaranteed not to leak as long as you own your home! A 50-gallon Marathon is \$450 for RECC members (before rebates), and the 75-gallon unit is \$525. The electric replacement rebate is \$50 for either model. For a new home or gas conversion, the price of the 50-gallon Marathon is just \$200, and the 75-gallon unit is \$275.

Call us for more information on these great rebates and prices on new water heaters. It's another benefit of being a co-op member!



Think of it as the gas pedal in your car

You know what happens when you constantly speed up and slow down, or run your car at high speeds. You use a lot more fuel. The same is true of your heating system thermostat. Constantly changing your temperature setting consumes more energy. Setting it on high temperatures drastically increases your electric bill. So, pick a comfortable setting – between 68 degrees and 72 degrees; set it and forget it. You'll be comfortable, and you'll get a lot more hours of heat per dollar.

1999 Youth Tour, Youth Day programs set

Once again, Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative is offering area high school juniors an opportunity to meet with top students from other co-ops in Springfield and Washington, D.C.

Up to 10 local students will be sponsored by RECC at the Illinois Youth Day program on April 21, 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 trip, June 18-25, with about 1,000 young people from around the country. RECC sponsors these trips to encourage students to learn more about our government's operation and electric cooperatives.

Any junior attending a high school in RECC's service area is eligible for these expense-paid programs. Application request forms have been sent to our local schools, or the coupon below can be returned to 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 19, and the ten students selected for the Illinois Youth Day program will be notified by March 31 so that they can arrange their school sched-

ules around the trip on April 21. 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. The two winners will travel by bus from Springfield to Washington this summer, in one of the best-recognized youth programs in the nation's capital.

Even if a student is not chosen to be sponsored by RECC on the Youth to Washington tour, he or she may attend as a self-sponsored participant to share in this fantastic experience. At an expected cost of just \$650, including transportation, hotels, tours and meals, several Illinois students take advantage of this opportunity each year.

Tell your child, grandchild, neighbor or friend about these two super programs sponsored by your electric cooperative, and encourage them to apply. They can fill in the coupon or call our office at (800) 245-7322 and ask for Dana Smith, Director of Member & Public Relations, for more information. Don't let them miss this chance to meet new friends, learn about our government and co-ops, and have fun!

Tear off here and return to RECC, P.O. Box 19, Auburn, IL 62615

Request for Application 1999 Rural Electric Youth Day/Youth to Washington Tour

Student Name _____ Phone No. _____

High School Attended _____

Parent Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

What you can do during a blackout

A utility lineman was working another 16-hour day during an outage rebuilding a primary line when a woman drove up and unloaded a string of obscenities. She wanted heat and lights now. The lineman tried to explain to her that the line was down and it was dangerous. And, besides, restoring the primary line was a first step in getting power back to her and hundreds of others. She said, "I'm tired of listening to your excuses," and drove off.

It's very easy to lose your patience during a long outage. Linemen and all the other co-op employees hope you remember it took years to build the miles and miles of electric lines serving your home and others. Rebuilding a line after a major storm often can't be accomplished in just a couple hours.

There are things you can do to help. First, report your outage and anything you've seen like a downed power line. Second, be patient with our dispatchers answering the phone. The busy signal you'll probably hear is not because they've left the phone off the hook on purpose. It's probably glued to their ear as they try to answer hundreds of phone calls.

When a power line falls down in your road or yard, whatever you do, don't touch it. That's rule number one for coping with a blackout. The line might still be energized. Just because sparks aren't flying doesn't mean the power is off. Circuit breakers at the substation probably shut the line down as soon as it fell, but testing the reliability of the circuit breakers isn't worth a fatal shock. The circuit breaker may be set to try to reconnect the line during the first minute and power will rush through it again, if only for a split second. This is

why your lights may blink three times before finally going off.

Don't drive over a downed line, either; although your tires will insulate the car, you're taking the chance that the line may change position and injure you or someone else.

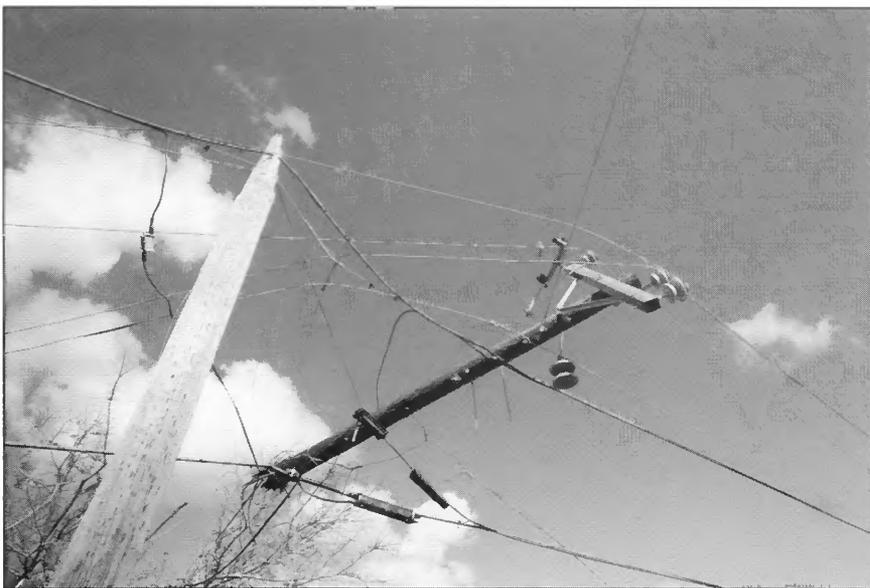
Rule number two is, don't put power into a line. (This means, do not plug a generator into the housewiring.) It is possible to light your house marginally by doing this, but you could kill someone because the power you put into your house could get out of it, into power lines outside. Going the other way, it will jump in voltage and suddenly you'll be feeding seven thousand volts into a wire that may be hanging low in somebody's yard, or that a lineman may be repairing. Instead, plug appliances or lights directly into the generator. For larger generators install a double throw transfer switch at the meter pole. Call the co-op if you have any questions on safe use of generators.

When repairs are under way, settle in with your candles and wait. The candles were in a convenient drawer with the matches

because you are an organized person who anticipates blackouts and you have stored candles, water and a battery-powered radio and you have a way to keep at least one room warm. If your home is on a well, fill a bathtub and large water containers as soon as you know a large storm is coming.

The linemen have one more word of advice. Turn off or unplug your appliances including your heater (or air-conditioner in the summer). There may be little bursts of power through the line when the power comes back on, the alternating current frequency may be momentarily higher or lower than normal. This surge may be uncomfortable for your appliances or your home computer. It helps the lineman too because, if at the moment power is restored, all the refrigerators and other big appliances in all the homes start up at the same time, that in itself can blow fuses and trip relays.

So when the lights go out don't touch the wires, don't plug a portable generator into your house, wiring unless you've installed a double throw transfer switch, call when you have information, turn off the appliances and wait. Check on your neighbors. Get out the camping equipment and candles. Finally, be safe and be patient. Our lineman won't stop until your lights are on.



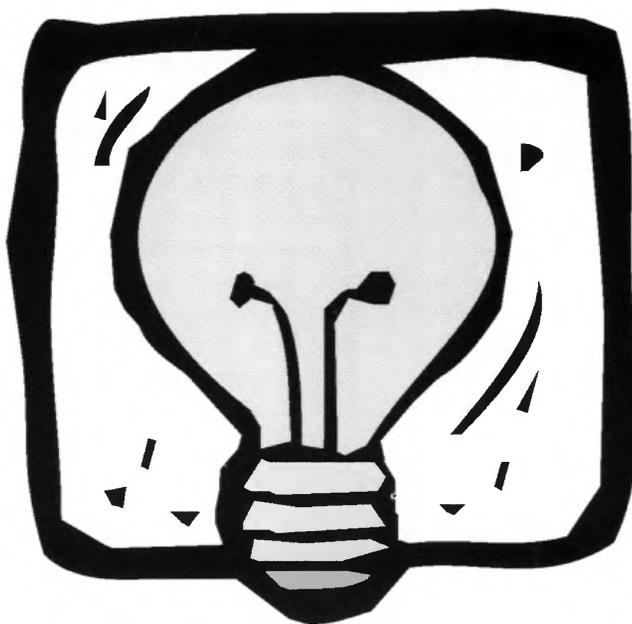
The simple essence of electricity

**Find a light bulb and sniff it.
Let everyone in the house sniff it.**

Don't be confused if you can't smell anything. You shouldn't be able to because electricity doesn't have a distinct smell. You can't smell electricity. With electricity, there are no odors, indoor pollution or carbon monoxide to worry about. Electricity provides safe and efficient power for everything in your home.

Please use electricity wisely and conserve when you can. Think about your family's safety when you buy a new appliance. Think electricity!

Electric Cooperatives of Illinois
Helping you use energy safely and efficiently





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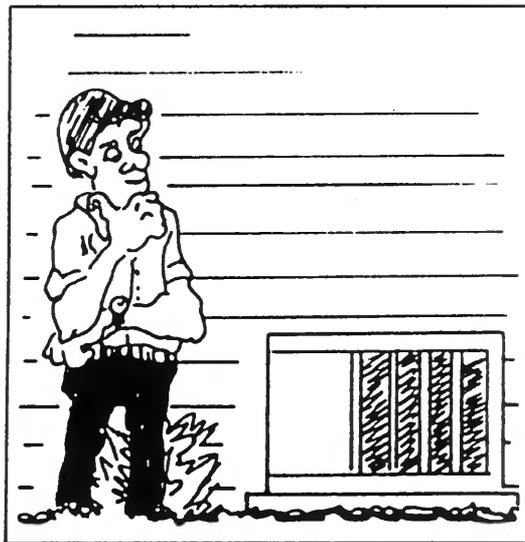
Prepare now for summer

Now is the time to start thinking about what you can do to be better prepared for the summer cooling season. Following are some suggestions that could save you money on your home energy costs.

- Consider planting some trees to shade your home. Trees do a wonderful job of shielding your home from direct sunlight in the summer. When they lose their leaves in the fall they let the sun shine through to help warm your home through the winter months. Trees also add beauty and value to your home.
- Shade your windows. This can be done several different ways:
 - Install window film. Professionals say adding a film covering to your windows is the best solution to blocking the sun's intense heat. It can be found in home centers and hardware stores, and is easy to install.
 - Install exterior awnings.
 - Use interior window shades, blinds and curtains to your advantage.
- Install some ceiling fans. They are quiet, economical to operate, and very effective at moving air. If you use ceiling fans you can set your air conditioner at a higher temperature level and still feel comfortable.
- Install a whole-house fan. Use of a whole-house fan in the evening, when outdoor temperatures are cooler, will substantially reduce your cooling costs. Constant use of an air conditioner will use much more electricity than a com-

bination of whole-house fan and air conditioner. Be sure, though, to install the fan with an airtight cover for the winter to prevent energy leaks!

- If you have central air conditioning:
 - Be sure to replace the filter in your duct system with a clean one. A dirty filter can increase your cost of cooling as much as ten percent.
 - Be sure to clean the condenser coils on the outside unit. Keep trash and plants away from the coils to allow good air circulation. A blocked coil will run longer than necessary to cool your home.
 - Try setting your thermostat at 78 degrees instead of 72 degrees. If you are willing to live with a higher temperature, you can save a considerable amount on your cooling bill.
 - If your central air conditioning unit is over ten years old, you may want to consider replacing it with a new, higher efficiency unit. When selecting a new air conditioner, be sure to choose one with an Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER) of 11.0 or higher.
 - Seal and caulk around windows. This will help keep the cooler, conditioned air inside the house. It will save energy next winter, too!



- If you don't already have a Peak Switch installed on your central air conditioner, ask RECC to install one now! You'll get a billing credit of \$25 for the months of June, July and August, in return for allowing us to cycle the operation of your air conditioner during peak demand periods.

Spring is a great time to landscape and beautify your yard, and one lasting investment you can make is to plant some trees. Trees provide summer shade, can help slow down the howling wind in winter, give kids a place to play around, and make your home look more attractive. There are some things to keep in mind before you get your shovel out to start planting, though.

Look up

Many homes have overhead power lines or phone lines going across the yard. That small maple tree you plant today will be 30 feet tall in a few years, and any nearby overhead wires will create problems. When the wind blows tall branches, or limbs break off under snow loads, they can pull wires down with them, causing inconveniences and possibly safety hazards.

Always plant trees at least 10 feet from any overhead wires, and add more distance for larger trees. If you must plant in close proximity to overhead lines, choose smaller, dwarf-variety trees or low-growing shrubs.



Check underground

More and more utilities are putting their wires and pipes underground, so you need to check for underground facilities before digging, excavating or trenching. Call RECC for a free locate of our high-voltage underground cable, and we'll mark our lines in the area where you plan to dig. Many other utilities use the JULIE locating service, where you can call 800-892-0123 to notify several companies of your intentions to dig. You need to give them at least two working days to check the area and mark their underground facilities.

Digging into an underground wire or pipeline can be extremely dangerous, as well as costly if you're held liable for any damages. Even if you think you know where electric, telephone, gas, water, fiber optic, sewer or other lines are buried, play it safe and call first!

Planting and landscaping are wonderful ideas for your homestead. Take the time to do it right, and you'll enjoy the process as well as the results.

Take advantage of these convenient programs and services from RECC!

Budget Billing - levelize your monthly electric bills

Automated Clearing House - your electric bill is paid directly from your bank account

Visa/MasterCard - convenient payment of your electric bill or other charges

Security Light Rental - one monthly payment includes all maintenance and energy costs

Energy Resource Conservation Loans - low-interest financing to improve your home's energy efficiency

Rebates - for installation of electric heating systems and appliances

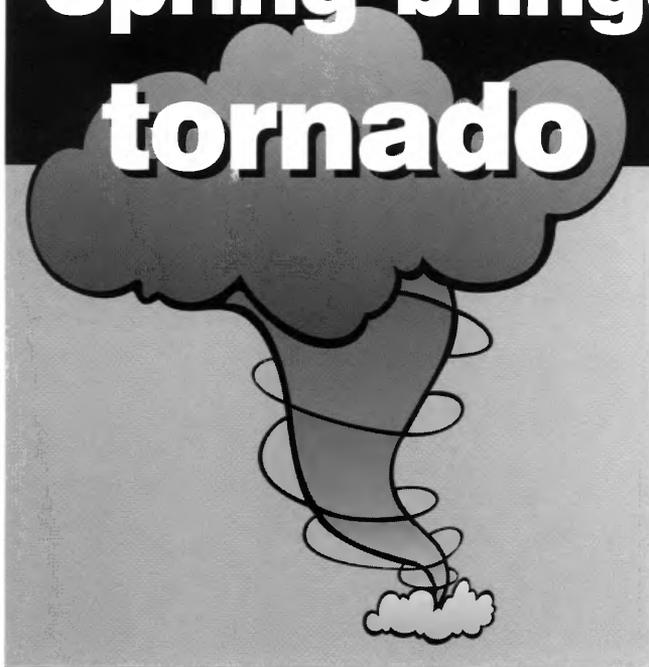
Safety Programs - for youth and adult groups

Water Heaters - standard and lifetime-warranty models available

Surge Suppressors - leasing program to protect appliances and electronics

Incentive Rates - Savings for almost everyone, with electric heat rates, Peak Switch for air conditioners/water heaters, or Interruptible options

Spring brings increase in tornado activity



Even though most thunderstorm and tornado activity normally takes place in April, May and June, Illinois has already had some severe storms, and we shouldn't be surprised if more come soon.

Normally, tornadoes and severe thunderstorms tend to develop in the late afternoon and early evening, but that's not always the case.

Now is the time of year when you might want to stash a few items in the safest place in your house, and leave everything there until you're sure the storm season's over. A flashlight should be in your kit, as well as a battery-powered radio and blankets and pillows. If you have a basement you should store your emergency kit in this safe area.

There are two different kinds of warnings involving tornadoes. A tornado watch simply means that the weather is getting rotten and that a tornado may develop if things get worse. You can go about your normal business if you "watch" the weather.

A tornado warning means that the weather is already rotten, and it's time to seek shelter in that little nest you prepared earlier. Warnings aren't issued unless a tornado shows up on radar, or one has actually been sighted.

If you hear a warning, go to your basement, if you have one. That's by far the safest place. In many homes, a stairwell, inside hallway or bathroom on the lowest floor will be the safest place.

Get into a closet or bathtub, if you need to.

If you're in a public building, look for a designated shelter. Often, there'll be one in an interior area on the lowest floor. Stay away from outside walls, doors and windows. Stay out of large rooms, such as gyms, and avoid parked vehicles.

If you're outside when a tornado comes, head for the nearest shelter. If you're caught out in the open, lie down in the nearest ditch or depression, preferably away from trees and power lines. Since flying debris is a major cause of deaths and injuries during tornadoes, cover your head as well as you can.

If you're in your car, get out and find shelter. If there is none, lie flat in a depression. Don't try to outrun a tornado in your car. This isn't the movies, it's reality!

One of the worst places to be in a tornado situation is a mobile home. Leave a mobile home immediately if you hear a tornado warning and take your chances in the best shelter you can find. Experts agree that you're better off in a ditch or small depression than in a mobile home.

If you're stuck in a tornado-prone area and a house without a basement, there is an option you may want to look into. Years ago, it was common practice to have a small storm shelter out in the yard, usually about half underground and mounded over.

As more and more homes were built with basements, they fell out of favor. If you have a mobile home, and no access to a better form of protection, you may want to give some thought to building such a shelter.

After the storm can be a dangerous time. Watch for downed power lines. They may look safe lying on the ground, but they are **not** insulated and they could still be energized and deadly.

Be careful clearing trees after a storm. Contact your local electric co-op if the trees are near power lines. They have the tools and training to handle the job safely.

Give your bill a break... while you break for vacation.



Your bags are packed, you remembered to put a hold on your mail and take the dog to your mother-in-law's for the week, but what about your montly electric bill? It won't go away just because you have.

You can, however, take steps to reduce your bill while you relax on vacation.

Make sure that all radios, televisions and lights are turned off. You can use dusk-to-dawn timers with lights to maintain the "presence" at home during the evening. Lower your refrigerator and/or freezer temperature settings. Turn off your water heater if you'll be gone more than a few days.

And after all of that is taken care of, remember to have fun while you're on vacation.



Electric Cooperatives of Illinois

For more information on conserving energy while you're away,
call your local electric cooperative.



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AUBURN, ILLINOIS

Heat pumps - not just for keeping cool

The summer cooling season is approaching, and many homeowners will decide it's time to replace their old central air conditioner with a more efficient model. For a small additional investment, they can gain efficiency for both cooling and heating, by installing an electric heat pump. They're called heat pumps because they pump heat into your home in the winter and out of your home in the summer. They are designed to provide year-round comfort.

What is a heat pump?

A heat pump is an electric device that captures the heat in the air or ground, and moves it to where you want it.

How do heat pumps work?

All types of heat pumps transfer heat from one place to another. During the winter, heat is absorbed in one coil by freon gas, then sent to another coil to be circulated through your home by a fan. In the summer, the flow in the heat pump reverses itself. The heat in your home is absorbed and sent outside, leaving your home feeling cool and comfortable.

What types of heat pump are available?

There are two types of heat pumps: air-to-air and geothermal. Air-to-air pumps extract heat from the atmosphere, and geothermal pumps extract heat from underground.

How can a heat pump keep your home warm in the winter?

Even on the coldest winter days, the outside air has heat in it (all the way down to -460 degrees F), so there's always heat available to be extracted from the air and the ground. However, most heat pumps have a balance point where the heat pump's output matches the heating needs of the house, which is when a backup heating unit kicks in to help maintain the desired temperature.

How long will a heat pump last?

Recent surveys of nearly 4,500 heat pump owners indicate the units will last an average of 15 to 20 years, and some units were still working after 26 years of use. New units are expected to last even longer.

Are heat pumps environmentally friendly?

Heat pumps are one of the most environmentally friendly ways of heating and cooling your home because they don't cause pollution. They are a clean source of energy because they burn no fuel (like oil or gas). They are a very safe system because there are no open flames or combustible products in your home to cause fumes, explosion or fire.

Does RECC provide any assistance for installing a heat pump?

The co-op offers rebates to reduce the initial installation cost of an air-to-air or geothermal heat pump. We also have Energy Conservation Loans available for retrofit installations, at a low five percent interest rate. And, all-electric heating systems are eligible for our Dual Fuel rate of 4¢ per kilowatt hour for your heating, cooling and water heating needs.

Give us a call for more details, and a list of qualified heat pump installers in your area!

Electric consumers' Bill of Rights

By Glenn English

For the past few years the front in the battle to protect small business and residential consumers in electric utility restructuring has been waged in state capitals. As those battles continue and as a second front opens in the United States Congress, it is time to once again declare what we believe all consumers are entitled to as restructuring of the electric utility industry begins to shift to the United States Congress.

During a national meeting last March, the directors of your electric cooperative endorsed a resolution that reaffirms our commitment to consumers.

We believe this Electric Energy Consumer Bill of Rights represents the standard against which electric utility restructuring proposals at the state and federal legislatures should be measured. All consumers must be guaranteed;

- 1. The right to have access to reliable, affordable and safe electric power.
- 2. The right to join together to establish and operate a consumer-owned not-for-profit electric utility.
- 3. The right of consumer-owned not-for-profit systems to be treated fairly and recognized as a unique form of business.
- 4. The right to elect representatives from among themselves to manage their consumer-owned form

of business to best meet their own needs.

5. The individual right to privacy that assures information about consumers will not be released without their prior express consent.

6. The right to determine the scope of energy services to be furnished through their consumer-owned not-for-profit utilities.

7. The right to use consumer-owned, not-for-profit utilities to provide additional services that meet the needs of their consumers and communities.

8. The right to work in cooperation with other consumer-owned entities with common goals.

As the debate over the future of how consumers purchase energy services continue, electric cooperatives will fight to ensure that legislators understand that these rights must be a part of legislation they consider if all consumers are going to be treated fairly.

We must continue to deliver a clear and focused message that we believe consumers — no matter the size — are entitled to expect certain rights in a restructured utility marketplace.

Glenn English is Chief Executive Officer of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Annual Meeting reminder

Plan to attend your cooperative's Annual Meeting of the membership, and be a part of the democratic process!

Thursday, June 10
Viriden KC Hall
1320 N. Dye
Viriden, IL

5 p.m. — Registration and free meal
Musical entertainment

7 p.m. — Business meeting
Door prizes, attendance gifts



Farm electrical safety checklist



Service pole and service entrance

YES NO

- ___ ___ Do farm family members and all hired farmhands know where and how to disconnect power in the case of an electrical emergency?
- ___ ___ Are disconnects, especially main breakers, regularly turned off and turned back on to ensure free action and good contact? (Manufacturers of circuit breakers claim that they should be opened and reclosed once per month.)
- ___ ___ In case of fire, can the electricity be shut off to that particular building on fire without shutting off electricity to the water pump?

Animal housing

YES NO

- ___ ___ Do animals enter a building or drink at the stock tanks without hesitation?
- ___ ___ Is the water piping (metallic) and service entrances of buildings properly grounded? (NOTE: Check for corrosion of grounding system by animal waste.)
- ___ ___ Is the farmer using an industry-made electric fencer which bears the UL label?
- ___ ___ Are heat lamps in farrowing houses hanging by the cord only? In case of drop, are there guards on the fixture?
- ___ ___ Are the lights enclosed in globes and guards (where required)?
- ___ ___ Is the wiring suitable for wet conditions (because of the humidity created by the animals' respiration)?
- ___ ___ Does all wiring appear to be in good condition and free from damage by rodents?

Grain-handling equipment

YES NO

- ___ ___ Are overhead lines out of the way of augers and winged-type farm equipment?
- ___ ___ Do all motors have correctly sized overcurrent protection?
- ___ ___ If magnetic starters are used, are heater coils of the proper size?

Machine shed

YES NO

- ___ ___ Is the grounding bayonet on drop cords, power tools, etc., intact?
- ___ ___ Is the service entrance properly grounded?
- ___ ___ Are all receptacles in use properly grounded?
- ___ ___ Are drop cords of adequate size for the appliance or machine they are serving?
- ___ ___ Are drop cords put away after use so machinery can't run over them?
- ___ ___ Are power tools such as circular saws, table saws, drills, jig saws, etc., left unplugged when not in use so that a child couldn't accidentally turn them on?
- ___ ___ Is it adequately lighted?
- ___ ___ Are drop cords in good condition with no sign of insulation damage?

General

YES NO

- ___ ___ Do children know whom to call in case of an electrical emergency?
- ___ ___ Do family members know first aid for electrical shock and/or burns?
- ___ ___ Are GFCI's installed where required?
- ___ ___ Do appliances function satisfactorily without giving a tingle to user when turned on?
- ___ ___ If lightning protection is installed, are all wires leading to ground?
- ___ ___ Are all electrical fittings on the gas pump of explosion-proof type?
- ___ ___ Before trees are planted, has proper siting been provided to avoid nearby overhead and underground power lines?
- ___ ___ Are trees free and clear of overhead electrical lines?
- ___ ___ Before new buildings are constructed, have the buildings been cleared of nearby overhead and underground power lines?
- ___ ___ Can tractors equipped with end loaders be raised to the most upper position and clear all overhead electrical lines?

*Items checked NO indicate a potential electrical safety hazard.
Proper action should be taken immediately to ensure safety.*



Demolition derbies and corn dogs, lemon shake-ups and funnel cake, Ferris wheels and tractor pulls. . . These are just a few of the treats you'll find at the fair. Whether you visit your local county fair, the DuQuoin State Fair or the Illinois State Fair, the electric cooperatives of Illinois would like you to remember the important role agriculture plays in our lives.

Just as electricity powers the modern farmstead, so the Illinois farmer feeds the world.

A salute to the Illinois farmer from:



Electric Cooperatives of Illinois

Powerful solutions for over 60 years



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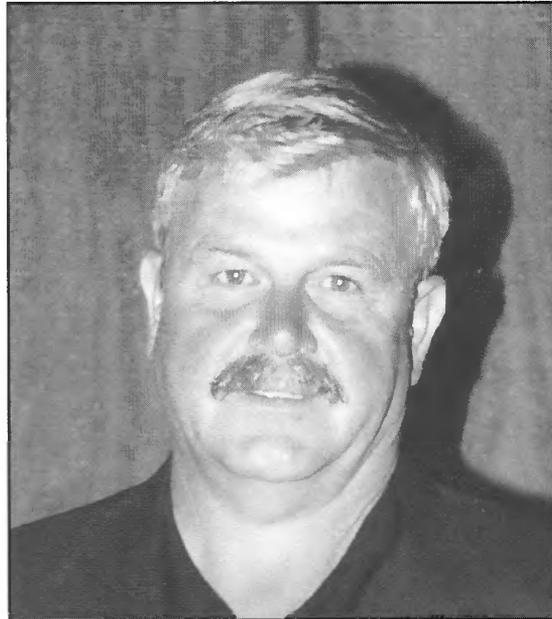
AUBURN, ILLINOIS

David Lewis elected to RECC Board

Members at the 1999 RECC Annual Meeting on June 10 elected three men to serve on the Board of Directors for three-year terms. Incumbents John Beatty of Auburn and Melvin Repscher of Taylorville were retained in Districts 5 and 6, respectively. In District 4, David Lewis of Virden was elected to replace Curtis Hays, who retired from the Board.

Dave grew up in the Virden area, and graduated from Virden High School. He worked for Central Illinois Public Service Company (CIPS) as a lineman for 11 years before starting his own electrical contracting business, D. Lewis Electric Inc. in Virden. He has four grown children, all living in this area. Dave is a member of First Christian Church in Virden, and is president of the West Cemetery Board near Thayer.

We welcome Dave to the RECC Board of Directors, and thank him for his willingness to dedicate part of his time for the good of all the cooperative's member-owners.



David Lewis

Are you planning on building a new home, remodeling, or changing your home heating or cooling system?



Call our member service department for information on Certified Comfort Homes, energy saving ideas, geothermal and heat pump rebates, 4-cent Dual Fuel heating/cooling rates, lifetime water heaters, and much more!

New Co-op Power Plus™ Visa® card introduced for RECC members

In an effort to create high-value services for our members, RECC introduced the new Co-op Power Plus™ Visa® card in July with a low interest rate and a host of other benefits.

"We remind ourselves at Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative every day that we're here to identify and offer our member-owners the best products and services with the highest level of value that we can," says Dean Fuchs, Manager of Finance and Office Services. "That's why we're pleased to offer what we believe is the best value in a credit card product available in the market today - the Co-op Power Plus™ Visa card."

This new card features a 3.9 percent fixed introductory annual percentage rate (APR) on purchases and balance transfers for the first five months; after that a low 9.99 percent variable APR applies, with a host of other benefits that make it an excellent choice for co-op members who want to take charge of their finances and save money.

"Our ability to take part in this national program with other cooperative utilities allows us to bring a high-value product to central Illinois residents," Fuchs says. The Co-op Power Plus™ Visa card will be offered by several cooperative utilities as part of a program organized by our national financing partner, CFC, and First USA, a leading credit card issuer.

One of the major benefits of the card is payment convenience. Some 15 million merchants

worldwide accept Visa cards today. Each day new fast food outlets, doctors, dentists, small business owners and even government entities begin accepting bankcards. RECC members can also pay their monthly bills or other fees with their bankcards.

In addition to the low APR, the Platinum Co-op Power Plus Visa card will offer other benefits:

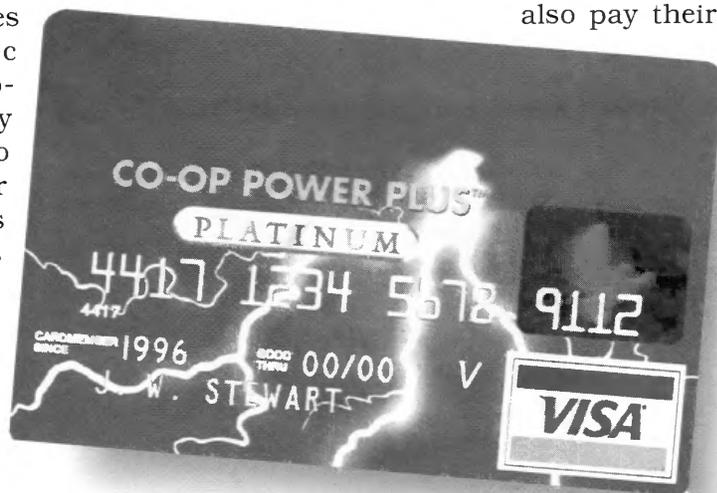
- No annual fee
- Credit lines from \$5,000 up to \$50,000
- \$1 million in Travel Accident Insurance
- 24-hour toll-free Cardmember Service

- Easy access to account information by telephone

"This product can really help consumers save money simply by switching from another card to the Co-op Power Plus™ Visa card," says Fuchs. "For example, a consumer who carries a \$1,000 balance on a card with an 18.9 percent APR could save \$90 a year by transferring that balance to Power Plus, even after the introductory rate has expired."

Members may receive information on

this value-packed service by mail, or a card application form is available from the co-op office. The card features a bold design with a background photograph of a dark blue sky with lightning to symbolize its link to power. The co-op's name and Power Plus logo are featured prominently along with the Visa landmark which ensures acceptance within the merchant community.

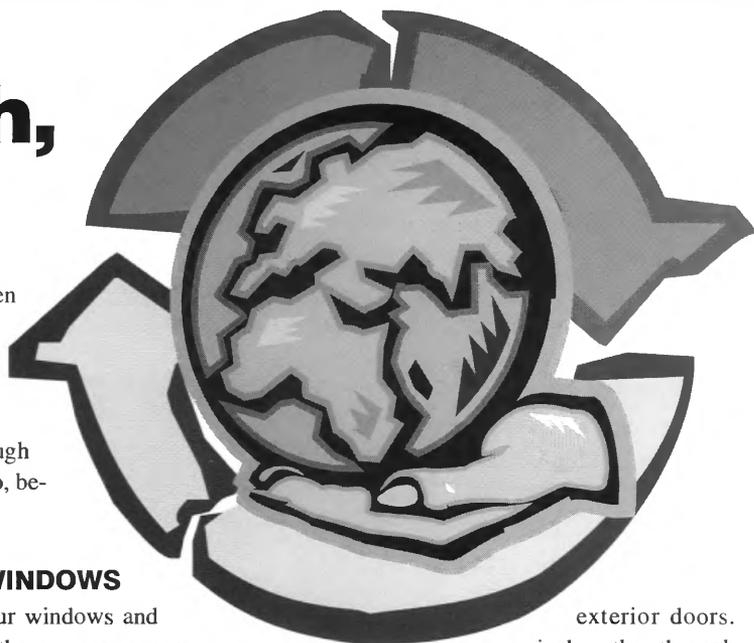


"A consumer who carries a \$1,000 balance on a card with an 18.9% APR could save \$90 a year."

Save money, save the earth, save energy

Over the last couple of decades, many of us have taken some steps to save energy and to help mitigate the damage we do to the environment. Recycling, composting and switching to more environmentally friendly products are some of the steps we've taken.

The following home energy-saving tips — even though they're often overlooked — help protect the environment too, because they help you use energy more efficiently.



INSULATING DOORS AND WINDOWS

Start with your home's biggest energy wasters — your windows and exterior doors. You lose more of your heating and cooling dollars through these — per square inch — than through any other part of your home. For example, heat passes through a window with a single pane of glass 14 times faster than through a well-insulated wall. So, even with an attic full of insulation, you can still be wasting money and energy through your windows and doors.

Install storm windows, or double-pane windows, to cut this energy drain in half. Over the last few years, window companies have developed various films designed to keep heat out — or in — and to prevent the passage of ultraviolet rays into the home. These will save energy and help prevent fading in pictures, furniture and carpets. Add storm doors for additional savings.

CAULKING AND WEATHER-STRIPPING

After insulating your windows and doors, don't forget to caulk and weather-strip around them. Almost 40 percent of your monthly heating and cooling bill may be going out through small cracks around doors and windows and other parts of your home.

Caulking is a rubber-like material that can expand or contract to seal air leaks around each pane of window glass and between door and window frames and the house. Weather-stripping is a flexible material (foam rubber, felt, or aluminum) that helps to assure a snug fit between the parts of windows and doors that open and close.

WATER HEATING

Water heating is the second-largest energy user in the average American house. You can save water and the energy needed to keep it hot by maintaining an energy-efficient water heating system and by conserving hot water.

Start with the water heating tank itself:

- Get the right size water heater. Keeping more hot water on hand than you need can waste energy.
- For every 10 degrees you lower the temperature, you can save about 6 percent of your water heating energy.
- If the sides of your water heater feel warm to the touch, you may need more insulation. Wrap a water heater with an insulating blanket, especially if the water heater is located in an unheated area of your home.

In addition to insulating the water heater, you will also save money by insulating the hot water pipes going out of the water heater.

If you don't have low-flow shower heads and faucet aerators to reduce water flow, install them soon. They'll help you save both water and energy. Aerated showerheads and faucets mix air with water to maintain pressure, and low-flow showerheads pulse the water flow. These simple devices are easily installed and can reduce the amount of water and energy used by 50 percent.

DUCT SEALING

Seal and insulate the ducts that carry heated or cooled air to the registers in each room of your house. Doing a checkup here can save 10 to 15 percent on your energy bill. All ductwork should be sealed at the joints to prevent leakage. Ducts located in unconditioned areas of your home (attic or crawlspaces) should be insulated.

SET-BACK THERMOSTAT

A set-back thermostat allows you to change the temperature setting or turn off your heating or cooling system at preset times. Each morning when you leave and each evening when you return, the temperature changes to save energy, automatically. Heating or cooling is done only when someone is home.

By using these easy and cost-effective energy saving guidelines, you can stay comfortable all year and still save money.

For more information on how you can save energy all around your house, call your friends at your electric cooperative. They'll be glad to help.

You, your neighbors... our cooperative



He's selling soft drinks to you at the town festival. She's sitting next to you at the school basketball game. Another one waves from the front step as you head to work. Yet another is buying a candy bar so your daughter's marching band can make that spring trip.

They're all around you. They are part of your electric cooperative, bringing the best possible electric service to homes, farms and businesses. They work in the office, or they are out on the power poles, or they are like you — a fellow member-owner. And, they are part of your community.

The "cooperative" kind of utility isn't some faceless office in a faraway city. It's you and the people you see at the grocery store or the local dance. It's you and your neighbors getting together to make your community a better place to live.

October is Cooperative Month



Electric Cooperatives of Illinois

Good for ALL Illinois



RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

AUBURN, ILLINOIS
217-438-6197

Rural Highlights

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

A Touchstone Energy Partner

Cooperatives... a great buy!

In a day when it seems that a dollar buys less and less, the men and women working at Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative are doing all they can to make sure you get the most out of every dollar you spend with us.

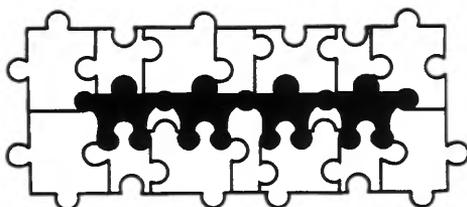
Consumer education is one of the primary missions of your cooperative. Wasting energy not only costs you money — it forces us to buy more power from generating plants, adding to the cost of operating the system and adding to your electric bill.

Whether it's a tip on installing energy-efficient lighting in your home or business, offering rebates on super-efficient geothermal and heat pump systems, or doing a blower door test to identify air infiltration problems, we want to help you get the best deal you can on the electricity you buy.

That's what makes energy conservation a partnership between you and your local electric co-op. It's the kind of alliance that we celebrate during Cooperative Month in October. Working together to find the best solutions is what cooperatives are all about.

Your electric cooperative was created to serve the people it provides power to — not to provide profits to out-of-town power companies. The principle on which we were founded — service to our local communities — is just as strong today as the day we opened our doors 63 years ago. Regardless of how much electricity you use, we at your local electric cooperative will do everything we can to help you get the most out of your power dollar.

COOPERATIVES



Businesses People Trust

October is
Co-op
Month!

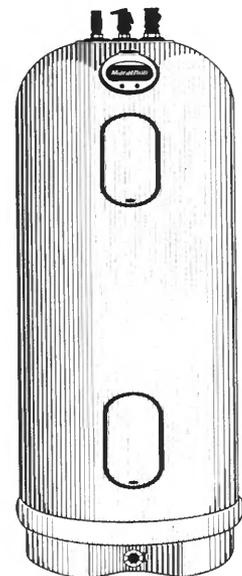
Before you buy another
water heater...

Save your energy!

• Plastic tank has "Lifetime" Warranty

• Highest Energy Efficiency Rating

• Designed for Easy Installation



Marathon
Here for Good.™

Ask about our rebates and special member prices!

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.

Good reasons to use carbon monoxide indicators and alarms

- Carbon monoxide (CO) cannot be detected by human senses. It is colorless, odorless and tasteless.
- CO can cause death, or permanent injury to oxygen-rich tissue such as the brain and heart. It is a cumulative poison. Even low levels of CO can cause irreversible learning and memory defects in fetuses.
- Fire fatalities are often caused by CO, as the gas may overcome unsuspecting victims before the smoke alarm goes off.
- Early symptoms of CO poisoning (dizziness, headaches, nausea, fatigue) are frequently misdiagnosed as flu or virus.
- Half of all fatal poisonings in the U.S. are attributed to carbon monoxide.
- Appliance malfunction and backdrafting cause about 1,500 fatalities each year in the U.S., plus another 10,000 serious injuries (such as paralysis, blindness, permanent brain damage) as well as a large number of long-term health problems.
- Automobiles are a major source of CO. Many incidents involving automobiles are the result of faulty exhaust systems. But, problems often occur even if the exhaust system is good. For example, flat-backed vehicles such as vans can create a negative pressure at the rear, which can cause exhaust fumes to be sucked into the vehicle through cracks in door/window seals, ill-fitting seams, or rust spots.
- Use of CO indicators will greatly reduce the number of deaths and injuries.

Disaster prepared: Don't let a
leave you quaking

QUAKE

With the recent earthquake in Turkey fresh in our minds, now may be a good time to reflect on the state of our own preparedness in the event of a similar disaster. Granted, earthquakes are few and far between in this part of the country, but southern Illinois is situated on or near the New Madrid fault, and a damaging tremor can't be ruled out completely.

That fissure hasn't done any serious acting up in a long time, but the last time it did it was a real spectacle. As heavily populated as our area is now, even a minor tremor on the fault could cause serious property damage. And, there are other forms of disaster that can cause problems.

The idea behind these guidelines is to offer you some quick, inexpensive tips that will enable you to reduce the damage to your property if a moderate quake or tornado were to hit. They involve little chores that even the all-thumbs handyman can accomplish, and that can be done at very little expense. Please note that they are simple steps designed to help you minimize property damage, and will not save your life if your house is blown away or if it collapses on you.

Elementary quake preparations are fairly simple. You need to secure your water heater so it won't fall over. To do that, you need a strip of plumber's tape, which is available at hardware stores and home centers. It's a metal strip about three-quarters of an inch wide, with nail holes about every inch. You need to nail one end of the strip to a stud behind your water heater, run the strip around the

unit and nail it to another stud. It's not enough to simply drive a nail into drywall!

Next, you should secure free-standing bookshelves and the like. You do that by using a heavy line, such as a high-strength fishing line, and hooks that screw into the wall and the back of the unit you need to anchor. Affix a hook into the bookshelf, another in the wall (be sure it's screwed into a stud), and tie the two together.

No matter what the problem is, whether it's Y2K, a tornado or an earthquake, it's important to know where your electrical main switch is so you can turn off all power if you have to. If you have natural gas or propane, you need to know where that shutoff is, and you'll really need one of the special wrenches it takes to shut them off.

Have a supply of bottled water on hand, and fill your bathtub so you'll have water to flush toilets with. Keep some canned foods that can be eaten cold, if necessary. While many soups and stews are palatable cold, they're much better warmed, so you may want a small camp stove and some spare fuel. A battery-powered radio would come in handy for weather reports. Whatever you do, don't forget a manually operated can opener.

Don't forget blankets and/or sleeping bags. Always keep candles, matches and a flashlight handy, and spare batteries, too. Remember that battery-powered lanterns are safer than coal oil lamps or those that use fossil fuels.

With any luck, you shouldn't have to go through the things we've outlined here. But if you do, you'll be pleased that you took our simple precautions. They take little effort and even less expense, and they can help a lot.

Use heat tapes properly for results, safety



This is the time of year when electric heat tapes get a real workout, to keep water pipes from freezing. And with that in mind, this is an especially good time to check your heat tapes and replace them, if necessary.

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) says consumers (including residents of mobile homes) should replace uncertified heat tapes that are more than three years old with certified ones that meet recognized voluntary standards.

An electric heat tape resembles an electric cord. It may be round or flat. Some varieties have an overall covering of light metal braid. There is an electrical plug on one end and sometimes a pod or box with a thermostat switch to control the power to the heating conductors in the tape.

Heat tapes are usually installed in crawl spaces or attics. Often, they are used on mobile homes to heat water supply pipes that come from underground up to a mobile home.

For all the benefits heat tapes offer, they can be dangerous. According to the CPSC, electric heat tapes are involved in about 2,000 fires each year, resulting in about 10 deaths and 100 injuries. CPSC urges you to help reduce this risk of fire and death by using only certified heat tapes on your pipes. One way you can tell the difference is that all new certified heat tapes will have three-prong plugs; the older uncertified ones have two-prong plugs. Currently, there are

three organizations that are certifying heat tapes to meet recognized national voluntary standards: Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. (UL), the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), and Factory Mutual Research Corporation (FMRC).

Buying heat tapes that meet voluntary standards offers you and your family a degree of protection, but heat tapes also must be installed and used properly to provide the most protection against freezing pipes, as well as the highest level of safety for you and your family.

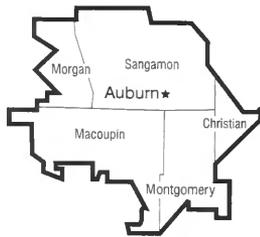
CPSC offers these safety tips for electric heat tapes:

- Inspect heat tapes each year and replace them if you notice signs of deterioration. Look for discolored surfaces (especially at the plug), charring, cuts or breaks in the insulation, or bare wires.
- When installing heat tapes, carefully observe installation instructions. Different heat tapes have different installation requirements.
- Always plug the three-prong plug into a three-prong outlet to make sure the heat tape is grounded.
- Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) wherever heat tapes are plugged in.
- Make sure the heat tape you use is intended for use on water pipes (other tapes heat

roof, gutters, or garden soil).

- Do not wrap heat tape over itself unless advised by the manufacturer. Use nonflammable insulation such as fiberglass. Do not use foam or vinyl insulation. It could catch fire if the heat tape fails.
- Apply heat tape directly on the pipe to be protected, never on top of the insulation covering the pipe.
- Keep the end cap sealed and off the ground to prevent water from getting in. Moisture can lead to a fire.
- If heat tape has a thermostat, check instructions to see if the thermostat should be placed against the pipe and covered with insulation or if it should be left hanging and uncovered.

Heat tapes perform a useful function, but like any electrical product, they need to be treated with care and respect. Don't create a fire hazard trying to keep your pipes from freezing. Replace uncertified heat tapes that are more than three years old. Buy heat tapes that meet voluntary standards. Install and use heat tapes properly.



RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE CO.

AUBURN, ILLINOIS
217-438-6197

Rural Highlights

Board of Directors: Jim Ayers, John Beatty, Ted Dowson, Cassie L. Eigenmann, David Lewis, Lee Marten, Melvin Repscher, David White, and Lyle Yeaman.
President/CEO: David Stuva

A Touchstone Energy™ Partner

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

Directors

Jimmy Ayers
Cassie Eigenmann
David White

John Beatty
David Lewis
Lee Marten

Lyle Yeaman
Ted Dowson
Melvin Repscher

Employees

David Stuva,
President/CEO
Clark Bowman
Bill Carter
Jeanette Clark
Craig Costello
Lou Delaby
Danna Elliott
Martha Fielding

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Dave Flynn
Dean Fuchs
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Bob Garner
Bill Hart
Tim Hemberger
Martin Hinton
Tom Jones

Jeff Lancaster
John Muchalfer
Curt Nichelson
Randy Olson
Jim Psaute
Dana Smith
Stefan Spoorer
Walt Wallace
Ken Williamson

***In observance of the holidays,
RECC's office will be closed
Dec. 24 and Dec. 31.***

What to do with those small appliances?

People love to give them as gifts at Christmas. Maybe you already have some stored away in your kitchen cabinets. Are those small electric appliances, such as crock pots and toaster ovens, good for something besides collecting dust? You bet!

In general, small ovens and slow cookers use about half the wattage of an electric oven, because they heat a smaller area to do the same job. They also save on your air conditioning bill in the summer, since they put less heat into your home.

When deciding on the appropriate appliance, consider the amount of food being cooked, the number of people served, and your cooking time. Here are some small appliances worth considering for their energy-saving potential:

Toaster ovens

- Preheat faster than a full-size oven.
- Are more efficient for baking small amounts of food than using a conventional oven. Consider a toaster oven when you have a small number of muffins or a few pieces of chicken to cook.
- Are especially practical for single people or small families.

Slow cookers

- Are made with energy-saving features, namely an insulating shell and internal element, which can help to save up to 80 percent compared to cooking similar dishes, such as stews and soups, on a range-top stove.
- Are a wise choice when a prolonged cooking period is required, for example, to tenderize less expensive meat cuts.
- Operate most efficiently when 3/4 full, which ensures proper heat distribution.
- Lose heat and waste energy each time the cook takes a peek. Allow food to cook for the recommended time before lifting the lid.

Electric frypans

- Require less electricity to operate than the range top to cook the same quantity of food.
- Waste energy when there is prolonged warming. Check the indicator light; when it is "off", the frypan is ready to use. Many foods do not require a preheated pan.

Pressure cookers

- Use less than 1/4 the energy of an ordinary pot on the range top.
- Cook foods three to ten times faster than a

regular pot on the range top. They are almost as fast as a microwave oven, because foods are cooked under pressure, allowing for much higher than normal temperatures.

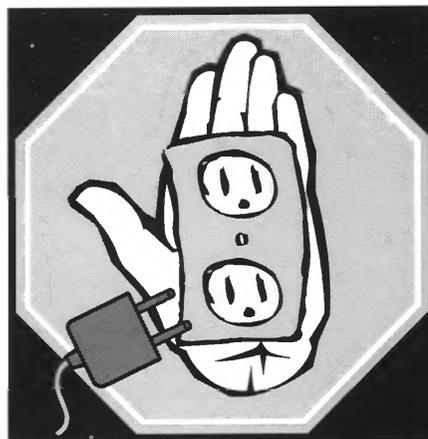
- Must be used in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations to ensure safe cooking.

In addition to the appliances already mentioned, there are many other small appliances that not only help with our hectic lifestyles, but also save energy. For example, an automatic bread machine mixes and cooks bread while we sleep. There are also specialty skillets and grills, portable hot air ovens, and even indoor electric barbecues.

So, if you receive another small appliance as a gift this Christmas, don't hide it away in your deepest corner cupboard — use it to its full advantage!

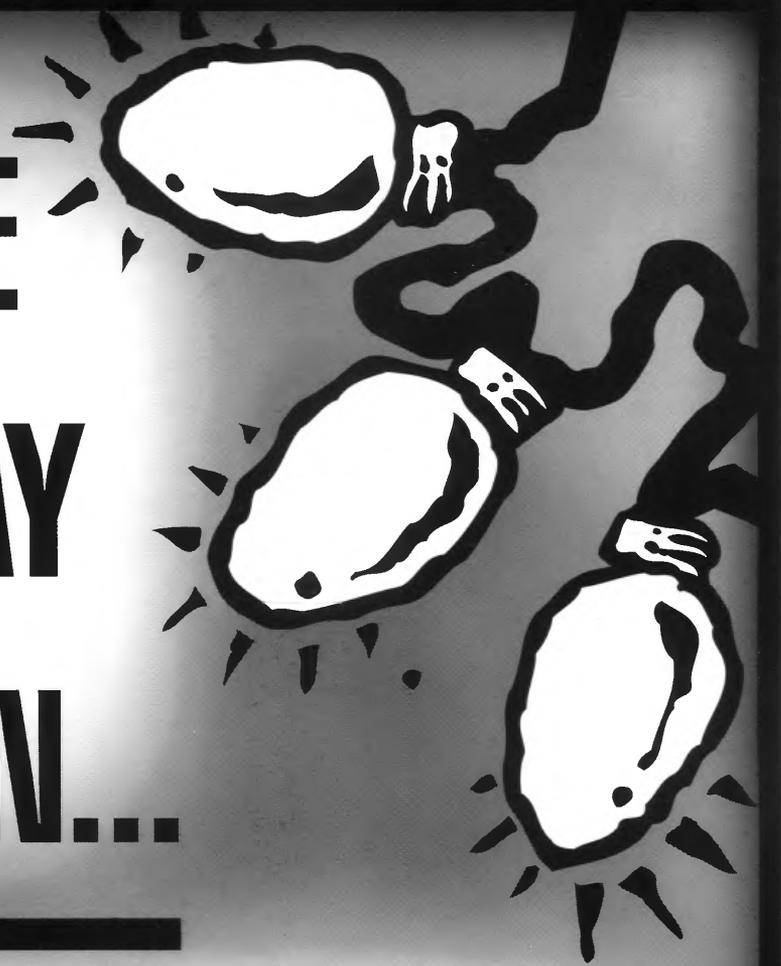


Unplug those appliances for safety!



For everybody's safety, it's best to unplug small appliances when they're not in use. Even when toasters, irons, hair dryers and other electric devices are turned off, they're still in contact with power as long as they're plugged in. That means if they come into contact with water and you touch them, you can receive a serious shock. And a dangling cord is a temptation to a small child or pet, which could be injured by a falling appliance whether it's plugged in or not.

AT THE HOLIDAY SEASON...



...We see the lights of Christmas dotting the Illinois countryside as thousands of electric cooperative families spread holiday cheer. Electric cooperatives of Illinois extend best wishes and season's greetings to the more than 170,000 consumer-members who own the electric cooperatives of this state.

We wish you everything that's bright and beautiful during this holiday season...and for the coming new year.