



*Mike Smith
President and CEO*



Pictured left to right are Scott Traser of McDonough Power; Mr. Crosby, Lincoln School Principal; and Angela DeRenzy of McDonough Power.

Coats for Kids – Season 14

Although many schools are not meeting in person, there continues to be a need for warm winter coats. When the temperatures began to descend in November, we geared up for our annual Coats for Kids program – providing brand new winter coats to elementary-age kids in our service territory. We provided almost 200 coats to students at schools throughout our service territory.
525HHE1A-951B

McDonough Power works with staff at each school to determine their needs. The program is funded by scrap metal sales, employee and director donations, as well as a matching grant from the CoBank Sharing Success Program. In the season of giving, we are thankful to be able to help the communities we serve!



Our office will be closed January 1 in observance of New Year's Day.



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Got the work-from-home blues? A few tips to help keep you sane

If you joined the masses who began working from home after COVID-19 hit the U.S., or even if you worked from a home office prior to its arrival, you know working from home has its challenges. As CNBC reported, “It used to be that working remotely was a perk. These days it’s about survival.”

Although statistics vary, an estimated 30 million people have lost jobs during the pandemic so far. For those of us who are fortunate enough to still have a job but now work from home, the days can seem to blend together one into the next.

In addition, work seems to beckon more often and more loudly because it’s physically right there. (It’s kind of like opening your freezer for ice cream versus making a late-night run.)

There are some upsides to working from home: saving money on gas, not getting dressed up, no more traffic or long commutes, less in-person interruptions (at least from your coworkers) and getting a little extra shuteye. On the contrary, many people have noticed that some of the upsides of working from home can spiral into downsides once the honeymoon phase is over: not getting out much, feeling isolated, and missing real, in-person connections.

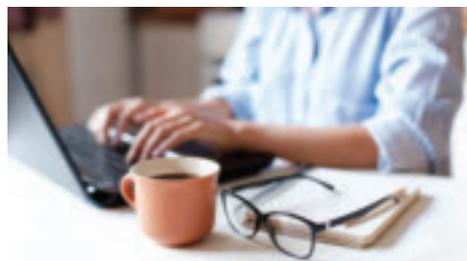
To keep work and home a little more separate, here are good reminders. Even if you have already tried them, they are worth revisiting.

Try to set a workday schedule and stick to it

A set schedule can help for two extremes: for people who are tempted to work too much (burnout, anyone?) or for those who are tempted by a shortened work day or the compulsion to do laundry or other in-home tasks during work hours.

Schedule and take breaks

Although it’s tempting to sit at your home desk so long that you have to unstick your legs from the chair, try to schedule a few 5- to 15-minute breaks throughout the day. What is your company’s break policy? Implement it at home. Working nonstop is noble (unless you’re from Sweden) but it actually decreases productivity.



Actually leave your house

This should go without saying, but as long as you are feeling well, go do something where you can maintain social distancing. Your body needs fresh air and we could all use a change of scenery at least once a day.

Have a dedicated office space

It is ideal (but not possible for everyone) if you can have your own office digs in a separate and private area of the house. If that’s not possible, try to implement other boundaries, such as covering or moving your workspace after hours, especially if it’s in a central hub of the home. Theoretically, this helps to keep work and personal life separate. **5223C8-952C**

Reach out for help if you need it

Talk to your supervisor or utilize your employee assistance program if it gets to be too much. As we all keep hearing, this is uncharted territory and the pandemic has brought new and different challenges.

Try to create an exercise routine

There probably aren’t too many steps from your desk to your couch, and grocery delivery doesn’t require much movement either. To boost mood and to care for your body, make daily or weekly exercise goals. Try to find something you enjoy (and are more likely to stick with) for some much-needed endorphin release.

Self-care – what’s that?

For overachievers, self-care can seem like a mirage out in the distance, or, frankly, something for other people. According to job guru Monster.com, 69 percent of employees are experiencing symptoms of burnout while working from home; and, despite that fact, 59 percent are taking less time off than they normally would.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Replace standard power strips with advanced power strips to save energy. Advanced power strips look like ordinary power strips, but they have built-in features that are designed to reduce the amount of energy used by standby electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use (also known as phantom load).

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) estimates that the average home loses \$200 annually to energy wasted by phantom load.

Source:
www.nrel.gov



Five ways to stay cozy this winter

Baby, it's cold outside! When you're feeling chilly at home, there are several budget-friendly ways you can keep comfortable without turning up the thermostat.

Here are five easy ways to stay cozy this winter:

1. Whether you're experiencing extremely cold winter temps or you simply "run cold," **an electric blanket can deliver quick warmth** like a regular throw or blanket cannot. Electric blankets can include a variety of features, like timers and dual temperature settings (if your cuddle buddy prefers less heat). This winter, consider an electric blanket instead of turning up the heat, and your energy bill will thank you.
2. One of the easiest ways to stay cozy at home is to **keep your feet warm**. Our feet play a critical role in regulating body temperature, so when your feet are warm, your body automatically feels warmer. Try a pair of comfortable wool socks or house slippers to stay toasty.
3. On winter days when the sun is shining, take advantage and **harness natural warmth from sunlight**. Open all curtains, drapes and blinds in your home to let the sunshine in – you'll be able to feel the difference. **639D5-708C**
4. Another way to make your home cozier is to **use a humidifier**. Cold air doesn't hold water vapor like warm air, so by adding humidity inside your home, you can feel a little warmer. A favorable

level of humidity inside your home can also help clear sinuses, soften skin and improve sleep.

5. Beyond adding visual appeal to your home, **area rugs can also provide extra insulation and a warm surface for your feet** on cold winter days. Use large area rugs in rooms where you spend the most time. You'll enjoy the new colors and textures of the rug, and the additional warmth will help keep your home comfortable. **5434D4-1262A**

These are just a few ways you can stay cozy this winter without turning up the thermostat. Don't forget the hot chocolate!

Member Prizes

Every month we will have four map location numbers hidden throughout The Wire. If you find the map location number that corresponds to the one on your bill (found above the usage graph), call our office and identify your number and the page that it is on. If correct, you will win a \$10 credit on your next electric bill.

2021 ENERGY EFFICIENCY CALENDAR



There are so many ways you can save energy! Saving energy helps reduce your family's monthly bills – and it helps our environment. Change your energy use habits by following the monthly tips below. Keep this calendar on your refrigerator to remind family members to be energy efficient throughout the year.

JANUARY

Turn off ceiling fans when you leave room.



FEBRUARY

Instead of turning up the heat, put on an extra layer of clothing or stay cozy under a blanket.

MARCH

Turn off lights when you leave a room.



APRIL

Ask an adult to help you plant a tree to help shade your home in the summer.

MAY

Decorate your backyard or porch with solar-powered lights.

JUNE

Take short showers instead of baths.



JULY

Dry heavy linens outside on a clothesline instead of using the dryer.

AUGUST

Ask an adult to help you schedule a reminder to change the A/C filter every 60-90 days.

SEPTEMBER

Turn off running water while brushing your teeth.



OCTOBER

Unplug energy vampires, like chargers, gaming consoles and cable/satellite boxes.

NOVEMBER

Remind family members to use cold water when washing clothes.



DECEMBER

Decorate your home with energy-saving LED holiday lights.