

President's Report



William R. Dodds
President/CEO

You're in good company with co-ops

Neighbors helping neighbors to create a better world

By Adam Schwartz

A fair question people often ask is, "What's in it for me?" This makes sense, as we all need to act in our own self-interest every now and then. The cool thing about co-ops is that we answer the question, "What's in it for me?" with, "This is what's in it for we."

When the market refuses to offer a good or service, or does so at such a high price, co-ops step in to fill the void. Cooperatives identify members of the community who have the same self-interests and bring them together to make a cooperative decision.

Seventy-nine years ago, when Spoon River Electric got started, the folks in our community shared at least one self-interest—they wanted electricity. In fact, many Americans who lived in rural parts of the country needed electricity, which is why electric cooperatives were formed. Individuals acted in their own self-interest, but that self-interest led to the community and economic development of the rural areas in which they lived. Today, rural electric co-ops serve over 42 million people in 47 states.

It is good to know that your friends and neighbor are also your co-owners of Spoon River. People coming together to

meet a particular need is at the heart of every kind of co-op. Local credit unions bring financial services to people that banks do not want to serve. In urban areas and college communities, housing co-ops offer people a safe, reliable and affordable place to live. Many agricultural co-ops started as a way to get their products to market, whether it was oranges (Sunkist), dairy (Land O'Lakes), grapes (Welch's), organic milk (Organic Valley) or any of the hundreds of other food products that co-ops bring to our table every day.

Many people who owned small businesses realized they too had a common self-interest: Stay in business. So they formed purchasing co-ops like Ace Hardware and True Value so they could compete with big-box stores like Home Depot and Lowe's.

Today, it is estimated that more than 40 percent of all residents in the U.S. are members of at least one co-op. Worldwide, well over a billion people are counted as co-op members.

So every time you turn on (or off) the lights, it can serve as a reminder that as a co-op member, you are in good company with your local neighbors—and with people all around the world.



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Spoon River Electric Cooperative – By the Numbers

Miles of line energized: 1,271
Number of members served: 4,808
Number of power poles
in territory: 29,255

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Electric bills increase during the winter for a variety of reasons – holiday gatherings, houseguests, and shorter days and longer nights. Small measures, like turning down your thermostat, replacing incandescent bulbs with LEDs and washing clothes in cold water can help control energy costs.

Source: TogetherWeSave.com



**Our office will be closed on
Friday, December 23 and
Monday, December 26
in observance of Christmas and on
Friday, December 30
and Monday, January 2
in observance of New Year's.**

Digital devices impact energy use

By Tom Tate

Ah, the Digital Age. We have gadgets galore, the ability to manage our homes in new and innovative ways, brilliant images and captivating sounds of modern entertainment options and of course, the internet. Clearly, digital devices reign supreme. Yet these cool new capabilities come with a couple of pitfalls; vampire loads and the issue of “technology reincarnation.”

Over the course of the Digital Age, electricity use has continued to increase. Families have multiple televisions. Computer prices have plummeted, meaning many homes now have multiple computers. Everyone in the family needs a cell phone. Gaming consoles and set top cable/satellite boxes satisfy our desire for entertainment.

Major appliances aside, most digital devices do not use 120-volt power, which is the standard voltage of a home outlet. They actually use a lot less. So, trying to plug your brand new smartphone directly into an outlet is going to lead to a fried device and lots of tears from someone. This is why low-voltage devices come with a power adapter. These “wall warts” as some term them, take the 120-volt electricity supplied by Spoon River and convert it to say, five volts. Unfortunately, most folks leave their adapters plugged in to make recharging easier. The problem with this approach is that the seemingly innocuous wall wart uses power even when it isn't charging a device.

This invisible energy consumption is often called “vampire load.” Studies show that 5 to 10 percent of the average home's energy use is from vampire loads. The only way to stop this is to unplug the power adapter when it is not in use or employ smart power strips. These look like the typical power

strip but with a twist—only one socket gets power all the time. When the device or appliance connected to it turns on and starts using power, the remaining sockets receive power too. This is perfect for entertainment systems, computer set ups and a variety of other situations.

Technological advances have steadily increased energy efficiency and reduced purchase prices. On its face, this seems like a good thing. Unfortunately, when replacing a product at the end of its life, the tendency is to go bigger, or continue to use the old tech. This is the second issue I noted—technology reincarnation.

For example, flat screen television prices have plummeted as technology has evolved—and so has the amount of electricity they use. Consumers wander into the big box store and are dazzled by walls of giant, brilliant televisions. What they used to pay for the paltry 32” model now might net them a 50” giant. And who doesn't want to see their favorite show or sports event in near life size? But if you spring for the bigger TV, you won't benefit from the increased energy efficiency of the newer technology. The bigger model uses as much juice as the older, smaller TV, which likely ends up in another room (reincarnated in another setting) still using power.



Or refrigerators. These are the showpieces of the evolution of smart appliances. Many new models include touchscreens and cameras; they communicate over the internet and probably even keep food cold and make ice. Yet what often happens is the old refrigerator ends up in the basement or garage, reincarnated as a dedicated beverage unit or overflow.

I'll offer a couple words of advice to help you avoid—or at least reduce—the effects of vampire loads and technology reincarnation. Invest in smart power strips or make a point to use outlets where you can conveniently unplug power adapters when not in use. Don't oversize your replacement appliances and entertainment gear unless family needs dictate the larger capacities. And recycle the replaced appliances and equipment to stem technology reincarnation. You will enjoy the Digital Age for a lot less.

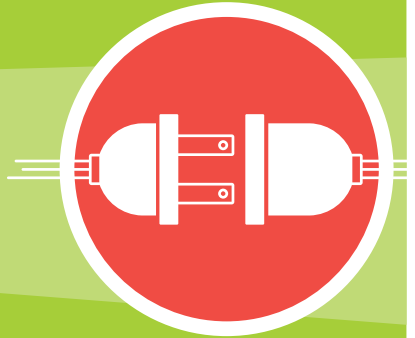
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HOLIDAY LIGHTING SAFETY TIPS



Consider purchasing LED holiday lights; they are cool to the touch and more energy efficient than incandescent bulbs.

Test holiday lights by connecting each strand before hanging them.



Make sure there are no broken bulbs or damaged or frayed cords. Discard any defective strands.

Use holiday lights that include the Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) label.



Avoid resting bulbs on tree needles and branches. Try using a clip to keep the bulbs upright.

Do not overload electrical outlets or extension cords.



Turn off all indoor and outdoor holiday lighting before leaving the house or going to bed.



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES