

Brighten The Holiday Season with Safety in Mind



With the holidays fast approaching, Rock Energy Cooperative would like to remind you to not let the bright and colorful sparkle of the season distract you from taking the precautions that you need to stay safe when decorating. So, before you begin decking the halls, please keep in mind these useful tips on safe holiday decorating.

HOLIDAY TREES

Never place your tree near heat-emitting devices, such as space heaters or radiators, which can become fire hazards. All lights should have a label indicating that they have been certified by an accredited independent testing laboratory. If you are decorating with an artificial tree, make sure you choose one with fire resistance protection. With a real tree, make sure that the needles are green and sturdy with a trunk that is sticky with resin. These are indicators that your tree is well-hydrated. Keep your tree stand filled with water so the tree doesn't become too dry and present a fire hazard.

LIGHTS & CORDS

Make sure the lights you're using are rated for the location in which they will be used—whether indoors or outside. Before hanging your lights, check the strands for broken bulbs as well as fraying or bare wires that could present electrical hazards. Always replace damaged products. If you use an extension cord, never run it (or any other cord) under carpets, through doorways, or where they could be damaged by furniture. Also make sure it is rated for outdoor use if that is where you are using it.

OUTDOOR DECORATING

When decorating outside, always be sure to look up and double check that you and any equipment, such as a ladder or a light strand, are a minimum of 10 feet away from overhead power lines. When securing light strands, never staple or nail them into place, as this could damage the product. Outdoor lights and decorations should be plugged into an outlet with ground fault circuit interrupter protection. GFCIs are inexpensive electrical devices that can be installed in a home's electrical system or built into a power cord to protect against electrical shock. A GFCI constantly monitors the flow of electricity through a circuit and will shut the circuit down if it senses a ground fault. Be sure to turn off all lights before leaving your home or going to sleep. A timer can help you do this.

We hope your season will be merry, bright, and safe.





Scholarships Offered to High School Seniors



Rock Energy Cooperative again is offering scholarships of \$1,000 to graduating high school seniors who enroll at an accredited school. Students whose parents or guardians are active members of REC are eligible.

Our scholarship committee will judge applicants based on general merit, cooperation, leadership abilities, financial need, and class ranking.

Since 1989, Rock Energy has awarded more than \$122,000 in financial aid to deserving students. An online application is available at www.rock.coop. Just go to the Community & Youth tab and click on Scholarships. The deadline for submitting applications is Jan. 10, 2022.

If you have any questions, please contact Jonas Berberich at 866-752-4550, or jonasb@rock.coop.

Applications must be completed online at www.rock.coop. To access the application, go to the Community & Youth tab and click on Scholarships.

2022 Director Elections

The Rock Energy Cooperative Nominating Committee will be selecting candidates to run for board of director positions that will be on the ballot at the 2022 annual meeting (date TBD).

DISTRICTS UP FOR ELECTION:

- **District 2:** Lima and Milton townships in Wisconsin.
- **District 4:** Harmony and LaPrairie townships and city of Janesville in Wisconsin.
- **District 9:** Center, Janesville, and Magnolia townships in Wisconsin.

Candidate submission deadline: November 30, 2021

Active members who are interested in running for a position on the REC Board of Directors must permanently reside in one of the areas up for election and meet all other qualifications. For more information, please contact the co-op at 866-752-4550, or send an email to questions@rock.coop.

New Director Elected and Two Directors Re-Elected at REC Annual Meeting

Rock Energy Cooperative held its 85th Annual Meeting on Monday, Sept. 27, at the Eclipse Center in Beloit, WI. During the meeting, one new director, Theresa Huber, was elected and two directors were re-elected in their districts:

- Barb Miller (re-elected) – District 1
- Theresa Huber (newly elected) – District 3
- Bill Fischer (re-elected) – District 5

CHANGE TO BYLAWS OF ROCK ENERGY COOPERATIVE

Article II. MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Also during the 85th Annual Meeting, the members voted to approve the following modification to the bylaws related to determining the time and place of future Annual Meetings.

The new/adjusted text is underlined and the replaced text is crossed out below:

Section 1. Annual Meeting: An Annual Meeting of the members of the Cooperative shall be held at such time and place as determined by the Board of Directors, within six ~~twelve~~ months after the close of the fiscal year.

Natural Gas Prices Continue to Climb

Natural gas prices have gone up significantly over the past year and are expected to continue to rise. Unfortunately, the rising prices will result in larger winter heating bills and higher costs for electric utilities for many consumers.

Natural gas prices have been caught in a perfect storm of lower supplies and rising demand. As economies have recovered from the pandemic, demand for fuel has increased. With industry returning, natural gas is now being used more in very large quantities, thus pushing the price up.

Severe weather events have also led the uptick in natural gas prices, which spiked back in February when parts of the south and the Midwest were struck by a massive deep-freeze. The freeze event was followed by unprecedented heat this summer that stoked air conditioning demand across the U.S. As a result of this massive heatwave, less gas was put into storage for winter months, during the key summer injection period. Add to that, any colder than normal winter weather and prices could jump even more.

Natural gas is also one of the key factors influencing the price of electricity. For instance, when there are natural gas supply constraints or disruptions because of extreme weather events and accidental damage to transportation and delivery infrastructure, the cost of electricity is affected. Higher natural gas prices, in turn, usually result in higher costs to generate electricity.

Energy Assistance Available for Low-Income Households



Weatherization Services

When you apply for energy assistance, the local agency also will see if you qualify for the Weatherization Assistance Program, which helps fund energy-efficiency, home improvement projects. If you are eligible for weatherization services, an energy auditor will look at your home to see what can be done to make it more energy efficient. Weatherization services differ with each home, depending on how it was built and its condition.

For general information about LIHEAP, call 877-411-9276, or visit www.illinoisliheap.com.

LIHEAP Details

LIHEAP heat and electric assistance is a one-time benefit payment per heating season that is intended to help pay a portion of a household's heat and electric costs. The benefit amount depends on household size, income, and energy costs.

In most cases, the benefit is applied as a credit directly to the household's Rock Energy account. You do not need to duplicate your efforts by applying for assistance with both your local agency and Rock Energy. We will send you a letter about one month after receiving your application that will include details on your assistance status and dollar amounts.

You are eligible for heating assistance if your household's combined income is at or below the levels shown on this chart:

Income Eligibility:

If your household's combined income for the 30 days prior to application (gross income, before taxes are deducted) is at or below 200% of the federal poverty level*, as shown in the chart below, you may be eligible to receive assistance. If you rent, and your heat and/or electric is included in the rent, your rent must be greater than 30% of your income in order to be eligible to receive assistance.

2020 Federal Poverty Guidelines for 200% of Poverty for 2021 Program Year

Family Size	30 Day Income	Annual Income
1	\$2,147	\$25,760
2	\$2,903	\$34,840
3	\$3,660	\$43,920
4	\$4,417	\$53,000
5	\$5,173	\$62,080
6	\$5,930	\$71,160
7	\$6,590	\$79,081
8	\$6,737	\$80,838

Source:
Illinois Dept.
of Commerce
& Economic
Opportunity

* Program Year 2022 Income Guidelines are based on Federal Poverty Guidelines and State Median Income. The state reserves the right to adjust these levels based on the availability of federal appropriations.

For many Illinois households, energy costs place a severe and continuing stress on the family's budget. In some cases, families will be forced to make painful decisions about what bills to pay and necessities to cut.

The federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (ILHEAP) helps eligible low-income households pay for winter energy services. Fortunately, Rock Energy Cooperative works with ILHEAP, which benefits about 300,000 Illinois households each year.

Where to Apply

To apply for assistance, you'll need to complete a Home Energy Plus application and provide information on each household member and their income as well as records of your heating costs.

For more information and application details, please call your local office:

- Winnebago County (South Beloit, Rockton, and Roscoe residents only): 815-389-0914 or 815-624-7788, Rockton Township, 1315 N. Blackhawk Blvd., Rockton.
- Boone County: 815-544-3144, United Way of Boone County, 220 W. Locust St., Belvidere.
- Stephenson County: 815-232-3141 or 800-883-1111, Northwestern Illinois Community Action Agency, 27 S. State Ave., Freeport.
- McHenry County: 815-338-7752, McHenry County Housing Authority, 1108 N. Seminary Ave., Woodstock.



INCREASING YOUR NATURAL GAS OR ELECTRIC LOAD? CONTACT ROCK ENERGY FIRST

Co-op facilities are designed to meet an individual member's initial load requirement at the time service is started. If that load is significantly increased (either natural gas or electric load), the capacity of the present system might not be sufficient to handle it.

It is important that members make Rock Energy aware of increased electric or natural gas use so meters and services can be sized accordingly and it doesn't affect their service.

So, if you're planning any major projects/purchases that will require significantly increasing use of electricity or natural gas, please make sure to reach out to us and include Rock Energy in the planning process. Some of these projects/purchases may include:

- Building an addition to your home
- Purchasing an electric vehicle and charging it at home
- Adding a fan or two to cool livestock
- Adding new machinery in your shop or for your business

For those members who use REC natural gas, increasing load on the natural gas meter may cause the meter to break or not function properly. Appliances may not function properly as well, as the meter or service might not be allowing the necessary volume of gas to flow needed to run the additional appliances. Your system may overload if you begin using items such as:

- On-demand water heaters
- Pool heaters
- Larger furnaces
- Any other appliance adding significant load to your service

When load requirements are significantly increased, the system becomes overloaded and there could be a power outage. An overloaded system also can damage the co-op's transformers or your electrical equipment, which might lead to



If you plan on increasing your natural gas or electric load, like adding an EV charging station (above left) or a pool heater (above right), make sure to let Rock Energy know ahead of time.

expensive repairs.

REC's equipment often can handle an overload for a while, but its life span will decrease significantly when the rated capacity is exceeded over an extended period of time. That means additional costs for the co-op and may result in the member paying for the damaged co-op equipment.

So, if you're planning to increase your electric or natural gas load, please call our Operations Department at 866-752-4550. Our workers will gather the needed information and determine whether the capacity of the present equipment is adequate. In situations where a significant amount of new load will be added, we might need to install larger service equipment or make other changes.

Please notify us in advance to ensure that the required service upgrade will be available when you need it.

REC Offices Closed For Thanksgiving

Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 25, and Friday, Nov. 26, in observance of Thanksgiving. We will reopen at 7:30 a.m. Monday, Nov. 29.

Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekend and at the payment kiosk outside our South Beloit office, 15229 Willowbrook Rd.

Even though our offices are closed, standby crews are available. If you need to report a power outage, please call 866-752-4550.



Shane Larson, CEO

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**ROCK ENERGY
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Empowering Members Since 1936