

A window of assistance for those in need

President's Report



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President/CEO

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In today's economy, many of our members struggle to meet their basic expenses each month. Many members who draw Social Security are unable to pay their bills to the cooperative until after the first of the month. Currently those members are penalized for late payments.

We are offering a new program for members who can't pay their bills by the 21st. It will provide a new due date for those members, which will be the 6th of the month after the bill is received. The following members qualify:

- Those on a fixed income who are over the age of 62
- Spouses and children of veterans currently serving our country
- Disabled veterans
- Members whose only source of personal income is Supplemental Security Income

If you qualify for this program, please call our office and let us know. The new payment date for those who qualify will start in the month of January.

For example, the bills members receive in early January will be due on Jan. 21. For those members who are enrolled in this pro-



gram, those bills will have a due date of Feb. 6.

Being in this program does not prevent members from being disconnected for non-payment. It only allows those who need it some extra time to pay every month. Members whose bills are due by the 6th of the following month will still be penalized for payments made after that date.

This new program is designed

to help those members who need it most. In today's economy, money just doesn't go as far as it used to. Power costs, like other expenses, are rising, but some people's incomes are not.

If you have any questions about this program or are interested in signing up, please call the office at (309) 647-2700.

12 Days of Holiday Safety

It's easy to make safety a part of your holiday with these tips. Tackle one a day and you're well on your way to a safe New Year!

ESW



What's that noise?

Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Make sure everyone knows what to do if they hear them.



What a shocker!

Before use, inspect all electrical lights, decorations, and extension cords for damage.



Two's company, three's a crowd. Do not overload outlets with too many decorations or devices.



Is it working? Test your ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) and arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) to make sure they're protecting you.



Ouch! Prevent trips and falls by keeping cords safely along walls and out of doorways and high traffic areas.



Kids eat the darndest things! Avoid putting lights, metal hooks, breakable ornaments, and other small decorations within reach of young children.



Thirsty? Keep your Christmas tree stand full of water. A fresh, green tree poses less of a fire hazard than a dry tree.



Make a wish! Blow out the candles before leaving a room or going to bed.



Nice and warm. Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn — decorations, trees, gifts, and curtains.



Can't touch this! Consider installing tamper-resistant outlets/receptacles to prevent kids from inserting objects into the slots.



Escape Route: Share your family fire escape plan with overnight guests.



Hot stuff! Keep children away from cooking areas, use back burners and turn pot handles in away from little hands.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

During the holiday season, consider using ENERGY STAR-qualified lights and strands to decorate. They use 70 percent less energy than regular lights and last up to 10 times as long. They also give off less heat, reducing the risk of fire.

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (ENERGY STAR)

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Spoon River Electric Cooperative – By the Numbers

Miles of line energized: 1,249 • Number of members served: 4,944
Number of power poles in territory: 29,255

Prepare your home for a new year of efficiency



Many people turn over a new leaf at the beginning of a new year by making a resolution. This year why not make a resolution to stop wasting money? Some efficiency improvements are easy to accomplish, while others are more complex. Tackling it all at once can be overwhelming, but spaced out over a year, they are more manageable.

Efficiency actions that can be taken in the next few weeks:

- Buy and install low-flow showerheads, faucet aerators, and compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) bulbs from a hardware or home improvement store.
- Put a water heater blanket on your older water heater to help water in the tank stay hot.
- Apply rope caulk to very leaky window frames..
- Assess your heating and cooling systems, and determine if replacements are justified or whether you should retrofit them to make them work more efficiently and provide the same comfort (or better) for less energy.

Efficiency actions that can be taken in the next few months:

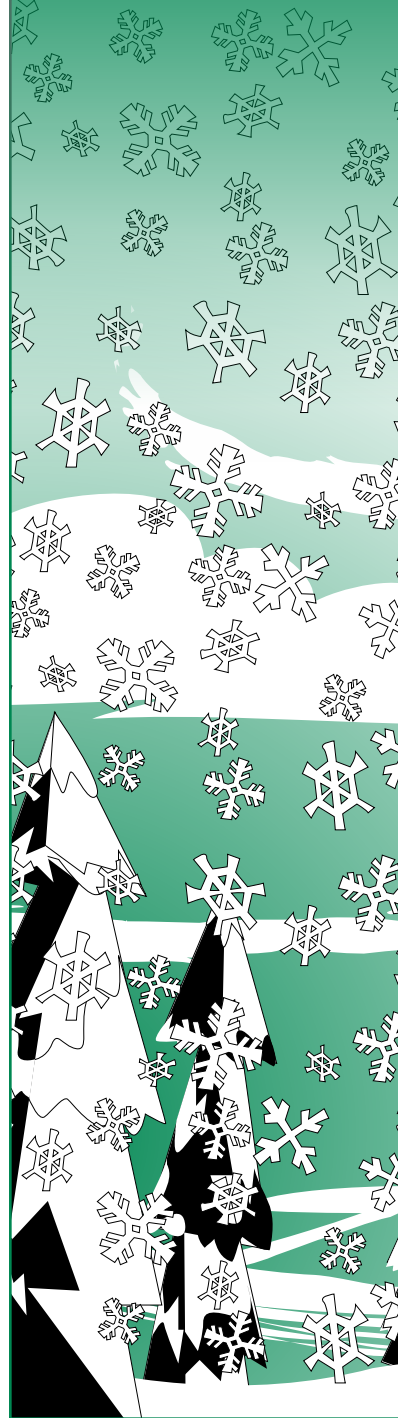
- Separate your electricity and heating oil/natural gas bills.

Target the biggest bill for energy conservation remedies.

- Find out what level of insulation is recommended for your area at EnergySavers.Gov. Then crawl into your attic and/or crawlspace, and inspect the insulation in order to determine if there is enough. If not, add the appropriate amount.
- Insulate hot water pipes and ducts wherever they run through unheated areas.
- Seal up the largest air leak. The worst culprits are usually not windows and doors, but plumbing penetrations, gaps around chimneys, recessed lights in insulated ceilings and unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets.
- Have an energy auditor with a blower door determine where the worst cracks are.
- Set your thermostat lower in the winter (higher in the summer) when you can accept cooler (warmer) conditions. This generally includes nighttime and whenever you leave your home for several hours. Many people find it easier to use an Energy Star programmable thermostat that you can set to automatically adjust.

For more information on home efficiency, go to EfficiencyResource.org.

We will be closed
December 23 & 26
for Christmas as
well as December
30 & January 2 for
New Years



Give practical gifts that help keep loved ones safe

Inevitably someone on your holiday shopping lists qualifies as that “hard-to-shop-for person.” Safe Electricity recommends getting these people practical gifts that will help keep them safe.

Portable Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlet – A GFCI monitors the amount of current flowing from the hot wire in the circuit to the neutral or return wire. If there is any imbalance, it shuts off the circuit. A GFCI is able to sense a mismatch as small as 4 or 5 milliamps, and it can react as quickly as one-thirtieth of a second. Such a device can avert an electrocution or other tragedy which might occur without the safety of a grounding connection.

- Plug-in GFCI tester – If a GFCI outlet does not have a built-in tester, this is a useful tool in determining whether the GFCI protection of that outlet is functioning properly. It is recommended that outlets be tested monthly.
- Heavy duty extension cord –

Often the tools or equipment necessary for larger projects are energized through extension cords that are inadequate for the heavier electrical load. Make sure the cord used is appropriately rated for the electrical load to which it will be connected.

- Power strip that has a built-in circuit breaker – Too many appliances and electronic devices plugged into the same circuit may require more power than is available. Tripping a circuit breaker on a power strip is much better than creating an overload in the circuit box in the basement.
- Smoke detectors and batteries – Smoke detectors are necessities in every home and can save lives. In fact, most homes could use more of these inexpensive safety devices. Even batteries for smoke detectors make great gifts. They serve as an important reminder that batteries should be replaced in smoke detectors twice a year.

- Flashlight and weather radio – During power outages, it is always a good idea to have a flashlight and weather radio on hand, so this holiday season you can make sure your loved ones are prepared for the next power outage. Plus, if that flashlight is a rechargeable LED flashlight, you’ve also added energy efficiency to the gift package!
- Gift certificate for a home electrical safety inspection – Electrical contractors have the equipment and knowledge to identify potential electrical problems, and your gift certificate may find a hidden problem that averts tragedy.
- Non-contact voltage tester – This is an inexpensive tool that any DIYer should have as it detects the presence of voltage without touching a bare wire.

For more information and videos on electrical safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

A gift of \$50: What could it mean to you?

Your family doesn’t know what to get you for Christmas, so you find yourself with \$50 in cash. Many of us are grateful for such a gift, but don’t be too quick to spend that money on the newest gadget. There are wise options for spending the money that will give you returns.

- Weatherize. If your energy bills are creeping up as winter sets in, think about investing that money in caulk or insulation to seal out any windy breezes. You’ll be warmer and when the

bill arrives, you’ll be happier.

- Cut credit card debt. If you put \$50 toward a \$2,000 credit card balance, you’ll cut your payback time by around four months if you usually pay a minimum of \$40 a month. Using the \$50 toward the debt can save you roughly \$103 in interest (calculated on 16 percent.)
- Buy financial management software. Use the \$50 to help you manage your money better by putting it toward some

financial management software like Quicken. It’ll help you keep better control of your checking account and help you identify other areas where you can save money.

- Pass it on. Buy something nice for your spouse, partner, friends, family or co-workers. Remember, there’s more to life than money, and seeing someone else happy has its returns.