



Spoon River News

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President's Report



William R. Dodds
President/CEO

Challenge of greening the future

Your home's electricity comes from one of two sources: fossil fuels and renewable resources. Electric cooperatives, public power districts, and public utility districts balance these resources to deliver safe, reliable, and affordable power.

Most electricity gets produced by burning fossil fuels, which emit greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide (blamed as a climate change contributor) or nuclear reactors that emit clean water vapor (steam) but create high-level radioactive waste.

Fossil fuels—primarily coal and natural gas—are non-renewable, with limited stockpiles. Nuclear energy, fueled by uranium, also relies on a finite resource.

Renewable sources of energy like water, wind, sun, biomass, the earth's heat, and hydrokinetic sources like tides and ocean waves replenish themselves. And when it comes to generating renewable electricity for rural America, electric cooperatives are leading the way. Electric co-ops receive 13 percent of their power requirements from renewable resources compared to 10 percent for electric utilities as a whole.

Renewable energy has its share of challenges. "Green" power resources don't exist everywhere or in sufficient quantity to "keep the lights on all of the time." There's also a need for more transmission lines to move renewable power from the places where it's generated to population centers, and a need for new technology capable of storing electricity produced by variable wind and solar facilities as a way to make them more reliable forms of generation.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), which oversees reliable operation of the bulk power grid covering the United States, most of Canada, and a sliver of Mexico, estimates 39,000 miles of transmission



lines need to be built by 2019, with 27 percent dedicated to connecting renewable resources to the grid. Yet getting these lines constructed poses major regulatory and community challenges. Already NERC claims almost 6,500 miles of planned transmission lines are delayed, with the typical delay lasting up to three years.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Energy Information Administration's (EIA) 2012 Energy Outlook forecasts the share of generation coming from renewable resources (including hydro) will grow from 13 percent in 2011 to 16 percent in 2040—mainly in the form of wind. But less than 25 percent of this renewable capacity will be available when consumers need it most, notably during times of peak demand, highlighting the need for research into development of advanced energy storage options.

It's important to note EIA's prediction for renewables growth is in response to federal tax credits, state-level mandates, and requirements to use more biomass-based transportation fuels—electricity can sometimes be produced as a byproduct of the refining process.

Electric cooperatives are working closely with others to remind Congress to keep the affordability of electric bills in mind when debating energy legislation. A sound approach to renewable energy remains an important element for consideration.

Set it and forget it:

The benefits of a programmable thermostat

A programmable thermostat is one of the quickest, easiest and most inexpensive ways to save on energy bills year-round. Programmable thermostats—which cost between \$50 to \$200—are a smart investment because they can reduce energy costs by as much as 15 percent annually.

A programmable thermostat makes saving energy easy by controlling the heating and cooling settings in both the winter and summer. It's like putting your house on "cruise control" by using pre-programmed settings that regulate the home's temperature during the night and even while you're on vacation. This type of thermostat automatically turns down the heat in the winter and turns up the cooling in the summer. A homeowner can save energy and money while still maintaining overall comfort.

Programmable thermostats are an easy energy-saving tool. Here are a few more energy savings tips:

- Always look for the ENERGY STAR label when buying a new thermostat.
- Use the pre-programmed settings to maximize energy savings.
- Heat pump systems require a special type of programmable thermostat. Consult with Spoon River Mechanical Services at (309) 647-3450 to determine what will work best for your home.
- Be sure to have the thermostat installed correctly using a certified HVAC contractor.

Programmable thermostats offer a lot of value by maximizing energy



savings without sacrificing comfort. Best of all, they can be tailored to match a family's schedules. Consult with our HVAC subsidiary Spoon River Mechanical Services to determine what will work best for your home.

Energy Efficiency



Tip of the Month

Don't get your electric bill caught in a spin cycle! When doing laundry, use cold water. If your dryer has a moisture meter, use it to prevent over-drying clothes—50 minutes often works best for a full load. And remember to check your lint filter each time before you run a load to help your dryer run more efficiently (and save energy). Find more ways to save at TogetherWeSave.com

Source: Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

Spoon River Electric Cooperative

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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

Comeback for energy tax credits

Feds revive incentives for efficient home upgrades

By Megan McKay-Noe

Ready to boost your home's energy efficiency without breaking the bank? The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 revived energy efficiency tax credits to the tune of \$500.

The credit offsets the cost of upgrades such as super-efficient water heaters and furnaces, boilers, heat pumps, central air conditioners, building insulation, windows, and roofs.

This marks the third extension of the incentive initiated by the federal Energy Policy Act of 2005. The last round expired in 2011; the new legislation covers 2012 upgrades along with projects undertaken in 2013. If you've already received an energy tax credit, you're out of luck—there's a lifetime cap of \$500. Full details on qualifying upgrades and individual caps are at www.energystar.gov/taxcredits. Here are a few ways to lower your electric bill and save at tax time.

Insulating Factors

Recoup up to 10 percent of the cost of upgrading a home's envelope. The tax credit is capped at \$500 for all improvements; labor costs are not covered. Eligible upgrades are:

- Insulation materials
- Systems designed to reduce a home's heat loss/gain

- Exterior doors
- Skylights and windows (\$200 maximum for upgrades between 2006-2013)
- Qualifying metal or asphalt roofs

Heating and Cooling

Replacing your home's heating or cooling system? You could qualify for a tax credit ranging from \$50 to \$500 for units put in place between Jan. 1, 2012, and Dec. 31, 2013.

Eligible improvements are:

- High-efficiency water heaters (energy factor of at least 0.82 or thermal efficiency of at least 90 percent; \$300 cap)
- Electric heat pump water heaters with an energy factor of at least 2.0 (\$300 cap)
- Advanced main air circulating fan (\$50 cap)
- Qualifying central air conditioner (\$300 cap)
- Biomass stove (select fuels; \$300 cap)

Tax Credit Basics

Energy tax credits are non-refundable—they can increase your refund by reducing the taxes you owe, dollar for dollar, and can be carried forward to reduce taxes in following years. You don't get a separate check for the credit amount.

File for energy tax credits with IRS Form 5695. Be sure to keep a Manufacturer Certification Statement (a signed statement from the manufacturer certifying that the product or component qualifies for the tax credit) for your records. Eligible upgrades must be made to a taxpayer's primary residence by Dec. 31, 2013.

Rebate Locator

Some states offer further subsidies or rebates for efficiency projects. For a complete list of federal, state, and local energy efficiency assistance, visit the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, at www.dsireusa.org.

Sources: Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency, Tax Incentives Assistance Project

Megan McKay-Noe writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

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