



More Power to You

Powering Communities, Empowering Members

Shane L. Larson,
Chief Executive Officer

Every October, U.S. cooperatives celebrate National Cooperative Month by highlighting the qualities that make our business model unique: local democratic control and a commitment to supporting the communities we serve. Special significance is added to the commemoration this year because the United Nations General Assembly has designated 2012 as International Year of Cooperatives. So, in essence, October 2012 is National Cooperative Month in the International Year of Cooperatives.

Rock Energy Cooperative was founded 76 years ago because rural residents in our area didn't have electricity. Young people were leaving the countryside to find brighter futures in urban areas, and rural America was literally left in the dark. But instead of waiting for someone else to fix our problems, we turned to each other. We built our own utility, and we powered our future.

By our very nature, not-for-profit, member-governed cooperatives like Rock Energy empower members to improve their lives. We have an obligation to provide reliable, affordable, and safe electricity, but we take that a step further. We also support our members and enhance our communities.

Bringing electricity to the rural areas was a big first step, but we didn't stop there. Just think about some of the things that our co-op has done in the past year to help members and improve the communities that we call home:

- The co-op distributed more than \$700,000 in capital credits in 2012. Since our founding 76 years ago, about \$10.5 million has been paid to past and current members. That money was returned to members and helped fuel the local economy.
- Co-op crews moved electric poles and lines along Highway 26 between Janesville and Milton to accommodate the road project currently under way.
- A digital inventory of electric equipment in our Wis-

consin service territory was completed this summer. The data will help us provide quicker restoration of power during outages and assist in future engineering projects.

- Gas crews are working on a project that involves installing 10,000 feet of natural gas main to strengthen our distribution system and improve reliability in the South Beloit and Rockton areas as well as west of the Rock River.
- Our scholarship program continues to help young people in the area realize their dream of a college education. Since 1989, we have awarded more than \$68,000 in financial aid.

- We added discounts to our Co-op Connections Card. In addition to savings on prescriptions, the card now provides a new Healthy Savings package. Co-op members now have access to five discounted health benefit areas: vision, dental, hearing, lab imaging, and chiropractic care.



Member participation in the governance of the co-op is one of the most important aspects of the cooperative business model. As a member, you have a say in how the cooperative is governed. At the 2013 annual meeting on April 1, you will elect three directors to serve on the co-op's board of directors. If you're interested in serving on the board, see the notice on page 16d to learn about the nomination process.

October may be the official Co-op Month, and 2012 may be the International Year of Cooperatives. But here at Rock Energy we like to think that every month is Co-op Month and every year is the Year of Cooperatives. We never want to lose sight of our purpose: powering communities and empowering members.

As we celebrate National Cooperative Month, thank you for your efforts to strengthen our communities. We want you to continue to stay involved as we build a better future together. If we can do anything to improve our service, please let us know. ■



Use Portable Generators Safely

Portable generators may be handy during extended power outages, but they can be dangerous if not properly installed and operated.

A generator connected to a home's wiring or plugged into a regular household outlet can cause backfeeding along power lines and electrocute anyone who comes in contact with them—even if the lines seem dead. In 2005, a lineman died in Alabama when he contacted a power line that was energized by an improperly installed generator.

The use of portable generators has become more widespread, and they now are readily available at many home improvement stores. During the July storm when 7,000 Rock Energy Cooperative members lost power, workers making repairs discovered that many homes were hooked up to portable generators.

“Our line crews take necessary precautions before they work on downed power lines,” said Dennis Schultz, director of utility operations. “But even after these measures, our workers’ lives remain in members’ hands.”

Co-op workers are not the only ones in danger when



a portable generator is used improperly. Generator owners themselves may be at risk of electrocution, fire injury, property damage, or carbon monoxide poisoning if they do not follow the necessary safety rules.

Schultz recommended that members thinking about buying portable generators should consider whether it is a wise investment because outages that last long enough to warrant their use are very rare.


Here are some safety guidelines to follow when using a portable generator. Rock Energy also has brochures available with more information.

- Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring unless your home has been wired for generator use. This can cause backfeeding along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including workers making repairs. Have a licensed electrician install the equipment necessary to safely connect emergency generators to your home.
- Always plug appliances directly into generators. Connecting the generator to your home's circuits or wiring must be done by a qualified, licensed electrician who will install a transfer switch to prevent backfeeding.
- Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords. Make sure extension cords are free of cuts or tears, and the plug has three prongs. Overloaded cords can cause fires or equipment damage.
- Ensure your generator is properly grounded.
- Never overload a generator. A portable generator should only be used when necessary to power essential equipment or appliances.
- Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting it down.
- Keep the generator dry. Operate it on a dry surface under an open structure.
- Always have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby.
- Never fuel a generator while it is operating.
- Read and adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for safe operation. Never cut corners when it comes to safety. ■

WARNING!

Never connect a portable electric generator directly to your home's wiring.

Portable generators can be deadly when improperly installed. Rock Energy strongly encourages our residential customers to have a licensed electrician install the equipment necessary to safely connect emergency generators.



Gas Crews Working on the River



Rock Energy Cooperative gas crews and workers from J&R Underground of Blanchardville, Wis., float about 700 feet of natural gas pipe over the Rock River along Prairie Hill Road in South Beloit. After 40-foot sections of plastic pipe were melded together, workers used a stringing machine to pull the pipe across the river so it could be installed underground on the west side.



Above: The pipe also needed to be placed under the river so workers bored a hole before installing the pipe. The project is designed to strengthen the co-op's distribution system and improve reliability in the South Beloit and Rockton areas as well as west of the river. Left: Another part of the project involved installing steel pipe along Nazarene Drive, the frontage road to the east of Blackhawk Boulevard. Work is expected to finished by November. Members should not experience any interruption in their natural gas service during the project.

Get Connected

Check out these great deals offered with your Co-op Connections Card.



Anytime Fitness, 11447 Second St., Roscoe – (815) 623-8900 & 2240 Prairie Ave., Beloit – (608) 363-9999 – www.anytimefitness.com

A 24-hour health and fitness center featuring state-of-the-art strength training equipment and cutting edge cardio, scrupulously clean workout environment, and supportive atmosphere with personal fitness orientation.

First Month Free (new members only)

Evansville Oil Pros, 720 Brown School Road, Evansville – (608) 882-6457

Car and light truck maintenance, oil changes, brakes, new tire sales, tune-ups, batteries, and windshield replacement. Where quality and service come together.

\$3 Off Any Service

Introducing New Healthy Savings Discounts!

The same program that offers discounts at local merchants and has saved Rock Energy members \$46,000 on prescriptions now offers significant savings on dental, vision, hearing, lab and imaging services, and chiropractic work. To locate providers that participate in the Healthy Savings program, call (800) 800-7616 or visit HealthySavings.coop. Be sure to have your Co-op Connections Card handy.



Add Up Your Savings!

Tell us how much you have saved by using your Co-op Connections Card. If you have a story you'd like to share with other Rock Energy members, email Barbara Uebelacker at BarbU@rock.coop or call her at (866) 752-4550.

Director Nominations Open

The Rock Energy Cooperative Nominating Committee will be selecting candidates to run for board of director positions that will be up for election at the April 1, 2013, annual meeting.

Districts up for election are:

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

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. Please contact REC headquarters at (608) 752-4550 or (866) 752-4550 or send an e-mail to questions@rock.coop by Dec. 1. ■



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Two degrees can make a big difference on your electric bill. Setting your thermostat 2 degrees Fahrenheit higher in summer and lower in winter results in major energy savings. Investing in a programmable thermostat can save even more—these devices automatically lower and raise your home's temperature. Set it and forget it! Find more ways to saving at TogetherWeSave.com.

Source: Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives



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