JAMUP

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Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Merry Christmas

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Repairing vs. Replacing Your Appliances

As homeowners with many bills to pay, our tendency is to buy an appliance and keep it running as long as humanly possible. Repairing an old, faulty appliance may seem like the cheaper option, but this may not be the greatest strategy when we think about energy efficiency.

A key reason electric bills are so high is because old, inefficient appliances are eating up more energy than they are worth. For example, refrigerator models predating 1993 could be costing you up to $140 per year in electricity alone. If some of your major appliances fall into this category, you may be losing over hundreds of dollars a year.

Knowing how much energy your appliances use annually can be a great money saver and can help you make smart decisions on whether it would cost less to keep an old appliance running or buy a newer, more efficient one. **Terry Glodo**

To figure out how much energy your appliances use, check for an energy efficiency label. The amount of energy typically used per year is listed in kilowatt hours. If a label is not available, a home inspector can estimate energy use by determining the age of the appliances in the house and assessing their operation by checking for signs of wear and damage.

To translate this energy use into electric bills, check your utility bill to find out the kilowatt hour rate. You can then multiply this rate by the number of kilowatt hours your appliance uses per year to figure out the annual cost it takes to operate the appliance. By adding this figure to the initial price it cost to purchase the appliance and the cost of any repairs, you then have a comparison level to decide whether your appliance would cost you more or less to run than a new one.

"People often forget that over the life span of most appliances, the cost to operate them is far more than the initial purchase price," says Molly Hall, Executive Director of the Energy Education Council. "Therefore, using more energy-efficient appliances is almost always the wisest choice, even if the initial prices seem daunting."

If your appliance is nearing the end of its life span, it is time to calculate whether repairing it or replacing it will cost more. Here is the typical life span of major appliances:

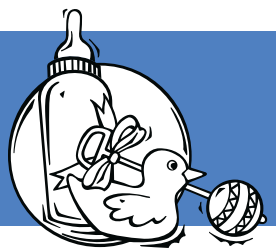
- Range - 18 years
- Furnace - 17 years
- Washer/Dryer - 16 years
- Refrigerator - 15 years
- Microwave - 15 years
- Air conditioner - 15 years
- Dishwasher - 13 years

As a result of the constant technological improvements made by appliance manufacturers, newer machines not only use less electricity, but they have more operational features and are made to last longer than counterparts produced within even the last decade. The efficiency will influence both your lifestyle and your checkbook.

Consider improvements made on some of the biggest energy-using appliances in the household. For example, a new refrigerator uses about 50 percent less energy than older models. Newer refrigerators feature CFC-free sealed systems, more storage, and easier cleaning.

A new washer and dryer unit uses 30 percent less energy than older models. Newer units feature larger capacity, better cleaning performance, quieter operation, preprogrammed cycle selections, reduced water usage, and automatic dryness sensors to avoid over drying and save energy.

A new air conditioner is 20 percent more efficient than units 10 years older and can save you roughly $930 in operation costs over its life span. Newer air conditioners feature automatic temperature adjustments, different air speed options, and increased circulation efficiency for consistent, even cooling. "You'll want to take these factors into consideration when you decide whether your old appliance is worth the trouble and expense of repairs," says Hall.



Congratulations Assistant Engineer Lane Ury and wife Melissa. They are the proud parents of Lawson Elijah Ury, born on October 13.

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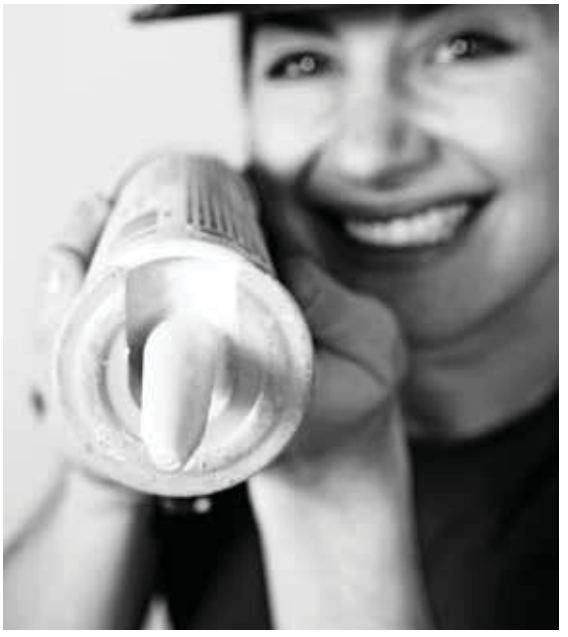
Prepare Homes for Winter – Energy-Saving and Safety Tips



Before winter arrives with its higher home heating bills, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative (SIEC) and Safe Electricity encourage Co-op members to take steps now to improve both home energy efficiency and safety during the home heating season.

Energy dollars can pour out of homes through drafty doors, windows, un-insulated attics, walls, floors, and basements while safety risks go unnoticed. A small investment of time now can pay big dividends in keeping your home safe and warm this winter.

Most winterizing steps can pay for themselves relatively quickly with heating bill savings. Weather stripping and caulking are inexpensive and among the simplest, most effective ways to boost efficiency and cut energy costs year round.

As you take steps to winterize your home, you can also inspect for electrical hazards and eliminate electrical fire and shock risks. For example, as you check around outlets and other places where air can leak, also check for overloaded outlets and cover plates that are warm to the touch.

Approximately one-third of all house fires nationwide occur during the cold, home-heating season. Many of these winter fires can be attributed to faulty and improper use and maintenance of heating equipment.

Before firing up your heating system, make sure furnace and heaters are in good working order, and check ducts, flues and chimneys. Have a professional inspect and service your furnace each fall for safety and efficiency. Regularly clean or replace furnace filters during high winter use. An efficient heating system means greater comfort at lower cost. Keeping heating equipment clean and in good repair will ensure peak efficiency and safety.

If an electric space heater is used, make sure the wiring is adequate, and check for cord fraying, splitting wires, or overheating. Don't place a portable heater in high-traffic areas and keep it clear of flammables such as curtains, bedding, clothes and furniture. Never use extension cords with electric heaters.

Use these tips to help cut costs and improve home safety:

- Make sure attics and flooring above unheated spaces, such as crawl space and garage, are appropriately insulated.
- Find air leaks in homes by moistening fingertips and running them around doors or window frames to feel a draft, or hold up a tissue and see if it waves. Check around fixtures that penetrate walls, such as exhaust fans and electrical outlets, and look for gaps near dryer vents, chimneys and faucet pipes. Seal them all with caulking or weather-stripping.
- Replace screens with storm windows and doors. Double-paned glass plays an important role in reducing heat loss. Double-pane windows with low-e coating can reduce heating bills by 34 percent in cold climates compared to uncoated, single-pane windows. If you have older or leaky windows that you cannot replace, consider temporary fixes, such as plastic film kits that create the effect of an interior storm window. Jeff Scherer
- If you are shopping for new windows, glass doors, or skylights, look for the ENERGY STAR. Today's high-efficiency windows are 40 percent more energy efficient than standard windows and can cut heating and cooling costs by 15 percent.
- Consider replacing your furnace if it is more than 30 years old. Furnaces that old are usually less than 50 percent energy efficient.
- Install an automatic thermostat. An easy-to-install clock thermostat can automatically raise and lower home temperatures for

▶ *Continued on page 16d*

SIEC Hires Mechanic

Dongola native Cody Poole began employment with Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative (SIEC) on October 22, 2012 to fill its Mechanic position. Poole brings solid experience as a mechanic, having served eight years in the United States Navy, where he taught as an Advanced Mechanic Instructor at the Naval Construction Training Center in Gulf Port, Miss. During his time with the Navy, Cody traveled to Iceland where he lived for two years. He was deployed three times; Guam, Okinawa, Japan and Iraq.

When asked about his desire to work for the Co-op, Poole explained, "I've always heard SIEC is a great place to work. Before I was hired, I knew a few people that worked at the Co-op, and they seemed to really like their jobs. In my opinion, there's no better job in this area."

▸ *Continued from page 16c*

energy savings day and night.

Cathy S. Aaron

Don't overlook simple energy-saving steps such as opening curtains to let sunshine warm your home, and closing them at night to keep warmth in. And, make sure fireplace dampers are closed when not in use. These are effective energy-saving tips that cost you nothing.

While you winterize, use this electrical safety checklist:

- Check outlets and make sure they are not overloaded. Have a professional replace worn and outdated circuitry, and add enough outlets for appliances and electronics. Switch plates and outlets that are warm to the touch; frequent circuit breaker trips or blown fuses; dimming lights and shrinking monitors are electrical danger signs that should be inspected immediately by a licensed professional.
- Examine electrical cords for cracks, frays and damaged plugs, and don't run under rugs, furniture or behind baseboards.
- Check that light bulbs are proper wattage and securely screwed in light fixtures, so bulbs don't overheat and burn shades, drapes or nearby furniture.
- Make sure outlets in wet locations such as bathrooms, kitchen laundry and outdoors have ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs), and test and reset them monthly. If these outlets do not have GFCIs, have them professionally installed.
- Test your smoke detector batteries. Replace them if they are more than six months old.
- These steps help reduce the risk of fire, shock, injury or death.

For more home energy and safety information, visit www.SafeElectricity.org and www.siec.coop.

Like us on Facebook and visit www.siec.coop for more information about rates, electric safety, upcoming events, etc.

Our office will be closed December 25th and January 1st for the holiday season.

Member prize

In this issue of the JAMUP, we printed the names of three SIEC members who are eligible to receive a $10 credit toward their utility bill. If you find your name printed in this center section and it's not part of the story, call Jerri with your account number at **800-762-1400** to claim your prize.

Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative

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