

WATT'S HAPPENING

SCENIC RIVERS ENERGY COOPERATIVE
LANCASTER, DARLINGTON AND GAYS MILLS, WISCONSIN

Fight the winter chills

Another colder-than-normal winter is predicted for much of the country this year. Frigid temperatures can cause heating systems to work over time, and since heating and cooling can make up nearly half of your electric bill, you may experience sticker shock when you open that bill. Instead of waiting until after a potentially high bill is in your mailbox, be proactive. There are things you can do now to help ensure you are managing your energy use and spending less.

These simple steps can help you manage your use:

- Wrap exposed pipes and water heaters that are in unconditioned spaces.
- Make sure to change your air filter once a month.
- Keep drapes closed at night and keep those that don't get direct sunlight closed during the day, too.
- Keep the fireplace damper closed when it is not in use. Keeping it open can bring cold air into the room.
- Caulk around the fireplace hearth, and caulk or weather strip around doors and windows.
- Dress for the weather, even if you are inside. Wearing proper clothing like long sleeves and pants, or wrapping up in a cozy blanket will help combat the temptation of bumping up the thermostat.

So, when temperatures fall this winter and you hear your weatherman talking about bringing in pets and plants, take the steps above to help manage your use.

Using the tips above can certainly help you manage your energy use, but your bill may still be higher than normal in winter months. Why?

- The weather makes a big impact on electric bills, accounting for nearly half of your bill.
- Even those with the most efficient HVAC systems will see more use in extreme weather.
- When extreme cold temperatures hit, our heaters work overtime.
- For example, even if you set your thermostat to our recommended 68 degrees in the winter, when it is 19 degrees outside, your system has to work hard to make up that 49-degree difference.
- Your heater works harder and cycles on and off more often, making your use much higher. That means your bill will be much higher.
- Remember, there is value in comfort. For us to be comfortable in our homes, our heaters are going to work harder, but it may be worth the additional cost to you.

Additional tips:

- Call Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative and see what kinds of options might be right for you.
- Speak to one of our energy efficiency experts. They can help you understand how weather and your use patterns affect your bill.

April Lollar writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service organization for the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives. ■

HOME ELECTRICAL SAFETY INSPECTION



Always remember to use caution when you're near electricity! Ask an adult to help you complete the inspection below for your home. If you find any hazards, check "Needs Work," and ask an adult to fix them.

1. Electric outlets are not overloaded.
2. Electric cords do not run under rugs or furniture legs.
3. No electric cords are worn or frayed.
4. Electric appliances are kept away from water.
5. There is a fire extinguisher in the house.
6. Electric heaters are far away from flammable objects.
7. Power tools are stored in clean dry areas.
8. All smoke detectors are properly working.
9. There are safety plug covers on outlets that are not in use.
10. There are no trees near the house that interfere with power lines.

True	Needs Work

Five tips for space heater safety

As temperatures drop this winter, many will look for supplemental heating sources for their homes. Space heaters can be a good alternative for those who want to warm one area of their home without turning up the thermostat on the central heating system. However, space heaters are also responsible for 32 percent of house fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association. If you are planning to use a space heater in your home this winter, review these tips from Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative to keep you, your family and your property safe.

Materials – What are the components of your space heater made of? Parts like metal grating can be hot to the touch and may burn anyone who gets too close. Make sure you purchase a heater that is cool to the touch and has guards over the coils just in case little fingers get too close.

Placement – While it can be tempting to place a small heater on a shelf so it is not in the way of pets and children, it is safest to leave the heater on a level floor on a nonflammable surface. Keeping the space heater on the floor can keep it from falling over, preventing fire hazards. Also, remember that space heaters and bathrooms are not a good combination, unless the heater is designed for bathroom use. Moisture can damage the heater.

The most important rule about space heater placement is the three-foot rule. Whether you are using the heater in the bedroom, living room or kitchen, space heaters should always be kept three feet away from flammable materials and out of the way of children and pets.

Special Features – Does your space heater have an auto shutoff function if tipped over? Auto shutoff can be a lifesaver. If you currently own a space heater without auto shutoff, consider purchasing a heater with this important safety feature.

Cords – You should never use an extension cord when plugging in a space heater as it can cause overheating. The space heater should be plugged directly into a wall outlet, and should be the only thing plugged in to the wall outlet. Also make sure cords aren't in a high-traffic area so they are not a tripping hazard.

Use – Never leave a heater unattended while in use. If you are leaving your home or going to bed, make sure to unplug the heater.

Following these tips and making sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions can keep you safe this winter.

Did you know?

Space heaters are responsible for 32 percent of house fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association.



- * Place your space heater on a level, non-flammable surface.
- * Make sure your space heater has an auto shutoff function.
- * Never pair your space heater with an extension cord.
- * Never leave a space heater unattended when in use.
- * Purchase space heaters that are cool to the touch.

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Recipes

This “Oh so Good!” recipe comes from Rita Kruser (Cuba City).

Quick and Easy Grilled Portobello Mushrooms

On a grill or grill pan over medium-high heat, cook a large Portobello mushroom cap brushed generously with olive oil until soft, flipping once, 4 minutes per side. On the same grill or grill pan, warm 2 slices whole wheat bread brushed with 2 tsp olive oil, 2 minutes. Flip bread and place 1 oz Havarti cheese on 1 piece of bread. Make a sandwich with toasted bread, cheese, and Portobello mushroom cap. Serve with 4 pieces of roasted red pepper.



This recipe is great for snacking at home or for special family/friend gatherings. I (Heidi Pierce) have made it many times and it is so easy and delicious!

Chex Sweet Mix

- 1 c. Brown Sugar
- 1 c. Butter
- 1 c. Light Corn Syrup
- 12 oz Box Chex Cereal
- 12 (3 cups) Pecan Halves



In a saucepan, combine sugar, butter and syrup and boil for 2 minutes while stirring constantly. Then in a very large bowl combine the cereal and pecans. Then pour the syrup over the cereal and mix until everything is coated. Then put on a greased jelly roll pan and bake at 350 for 8 minutes. Bring it out to stir around and then put it back in the oven for another 8 minutes. Stir it and then let it cool on wax paper. After it is cooled, store in an air tight container.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



They're out of sight, but don't forget about your air ducts. Taking care of them can save money and energy. Check ducts for air leaks. Take care of minor sealing jobs with heat-approved tape, especially in attics and in vented crawl spaces. Call the pros for major ductwork repairs.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy



Vegetation Management

Zielies Tree Service Inc. will be working on the Belmont substation in Lafayette county.

It is important for SREC to maintain its rights-of-way for the following reasons:

- Accessibility for field crews, vehicles and equipment
- Fire prevention
- Reliable electric service
- Quality service with the reduction of outages and blinks
- Safety for workers and the public
- Meeting state and federal code requirements

On a daily basis, SREC employees and contractors are working throughout the area, at times on your property, to operate and maintain the electric system and our rights-of-ways. We appreciate your cooperation. If you have questions, please contact Jay at jgardner@srec.net or call 800-236-2141, ext. 566.

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Watt's Happening is published monthly as an information service to the member-owners of Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative.

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