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A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF OTERO COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP

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Fine-Tune Energy Use with the Right Television

By Scott Gates

Streamlining your home's energy use can make a big impact on monthly electric bills, especially with rising fuel costs rising. But the devil is in the details, and everyday energy wasters are sometimes easy to overlook.

One ever-present culprit lurks in your home right now. When combined with DVD players and video game consoles, television use makes up about 10 percent of an average household's annual electricity bill, according to Energy Star, a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Energy.

Depending on the technology behind the TV you're watching, your monthly related energy costs can vary dramatically. Standard sets use a cathode ray tube, with those smaller than 40 inches drawing roughly 73W when on close to what a 75W incandescent lightbulb uses. An average flat-screen LCD television of the same size also requires 70 W, while a similar flat-screen plasma TV can really suck some power, consuming an average 246 W when on.

With more families opting for flat screen TVs these days, the choice between LCD and plasma can really make an impact, to almost startling levels on a national scale.

Currently, there are more than 275 million TVs in use across the country, with the average household tuning in 4.7 hours a day. It takes more than 50 billion kWh a year to keep those sets on, according to EPA, meaning it costs Americans \$5.2 billion to watch all of that TV.

Of the total electricity generated in a single year, a full 1.2 percent goes toward keeping televisions glowing. And if current buying trends continue, that number could climb to nearly 2 percent in a few years, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council, a New York City-based environmental advocacy group.

The good news is that energy-efficient TVs LCD, plasma, and otherwise are

becoming available. This November, blue Energy Star labels will appear on all TVs that use less energy when turned on. Current Energy Star TV labels only indicate how efficient a set is when switched off, in standby mode.

"Energy Star's new specifications for televisions are turning the channel on energy guzzling sets, making them go the way of rabbit-ears and black and white broadcasts," quips EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson.

Energy Star estimates that if all of the TVs sold in the United States meet the new requirements, energy savings could grow to \$1 billion a year. Related greenhouse gas emissions, meanwhile, would be reduced by the equivalent of taking about 1 million cars off the road.

If you're not in the market for a new TV, you can still cut back on the electricity your old set uses by adjusting the picture settings. The brighter the screen, the more energy it needs. Also, the small stream of electricity a TV draws while in standby mode can be eliminated by unplugging it, or by plugging it into a power strip that can be switched off.

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Energy Information Administration, Natural Resources Defense Council, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Scott Gates writes on technology and energy efficiency 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.

Apartment Living: Energy Efficiency Style

Simple energy conservation measures can lower your utility bills while increasing the comfort of your apartment. Although your landlord or management company is ultimately responsible for your building's energy efficiency, you can make money-saving energy decisions in your own home.

Many ways for cutting electricity costs in houses also apply to apartments. You can reduce electricity use in your apartment by focusing on these areas:

Appliances and electronics

Purchase energy-efficient products and utilize any efficiency-related settings. These include microwaves, toasters, computers, alarm clocks, televisions, stereos, DVD players, and room air conditioners, etc.

Lighting

Purchase energy-efficient lighting products, like compact fluorescent lamps. Switch lights off when not in use, and incorporate more daylight into your apartment using windows, window treatments, and skylights.

Heating and Cooling

You might need permission from your landlord or management company to implement some of these, or ask that they do the work:

- Caulk and weather strip around windows and exterior doors.
- Carefully select, install, and use window treatments or coverings.

Water Heating

Again, you might need permission from your landlord or management company to implement some of these:

- Reduce hot water use.
- Lower your water heating temperature.
- Insulate your water heater tank and pipes.
- Install a timer and use off-peak power.

For more information on energy efficiency, visit <http://www.eere.energy.gov/>

Source: U.S. Department of Energy Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Energy Efficiency - Tip of the Month

Save money and energy by implementing these no-cost efficiency measures:

- Turn off lights when rooms are not Occupied.
- Tap winter daylight by leaving window blinds open.
- Disconnect unnecessary or unused equipment.

Source: Energy Star

After a major power outage

The steps to restoring power

Step 1. Transmission towers and lines supply power to one or more transmission substations. These lines seldom fail, but they can be damaged by a hurricane or tornado. Tens of thousands of people could be served by one high-voltage transmission line, so if there is damage here it gets attention first.

Step 2. A co-op may have several local distribution substations, each serving thousands of consumers. When a major outage occurs, the local distribution substations are checked first. A problem here could be caused by failure in the transmission system supplying the substation. If the problem can be corrected at the substation level, power may be restored to a large number of people.

Step 3. Main distribution supply lines are checked next if the problem cannot be isolated at the substation. These supply lines carry electricity away from the substation to a group of consumers, such as a town or housing development. When power is restored at this stage, all consumers served by this supply line could see the lights come on, as long as there is no problem farther down the line.

Hurricanes and ice storms. Tornadoes and blizzards. Electric cooperative members have seen them all. And with such severe weather comes power outages. Restoring power after a major outage is a big job that involves much more than simply throwing a switch or removing a tree from a line.

The main goal is to restore power safely to the greatest number of members in the shortest time possible.

The major cause of outages is damage caused by fallen trees. That's why your electric cooperative has an ongoing right-of-way maintenance program.

This illustration explains how power typically is restored after a major disaster.

Area enlarged: Consumers themselves (not the co-op) are responsible for damage to the service installation on the building. Your co-op can't fix anything beyond this point. Call a licensed electrician.

Step 5. Sometimes, damage will occur on the service line between your house and the transformer on the nearby pole. This can explain why you have no power when your neighbor does. Your co-op needs to know you have an outage here, so a service crew can repair it.

Other co-ops
During a major outage, other cooperatives send line crews to assist with restoring power. These additional crews, as well as communications, equipment and supplies, are coordinated through the cooperatives' statewide organization.

Report your outage to the cooperative office. Employees or response services use every available phone line to receive your outage reports. Remember that a major outage can affect thousands of other members. Your cooperative appreciates your patience.

Co-op office
Individual households may receive special attention if loss of electricity affects life support systems or poses another immediate danger. If you or a family member depend on life support, call your cooperative before an emergency arises.

DANGER!
Stay clear of fallen lines