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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Shop co-op local
this holiday season**

**Tips for managing
your electric bill**

Slow cooker recipes

Win a Ring spotlight security camera ▶ See Page 3

PREPARING FOR WINTER

BY JIM GOSSETT



Each year, the harvest comes to an end and thoughts turn to winding down the year. Along with the beauty of seasonal activities and holidays comes the reality of lower temperatures. This has me thinking of your electric bill. There are some ways you can monitor and, to some degree (pun intended), better manage your electric bill in the colder months ahead.

When the weather turns frigid, many use space heaters, electric blankets, fireplaces and other supplemental heating sources in addition to running the furnace to keep warm. Water heaters work hard, too, which means some of your energy bills may be higher than in previous months. Space heating and water heating are the two biggest drivers of energy use in most households, accounting for over 50% of a home's energy use during the winter months.

Resources to monitor and manage your energy use

The good news is Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) offers several tools to help you manage your usage and make your home or business more energy efficient. We offer in-person energy audits for our member-owners at no additional cost. Visit www.rvec.coop for helpful energy efficiency tips that can lower your energy use in the winter and help keep energy bills down.

RVEC's SmartHub is very useful to member-owners. By going online, or installing an app on your phone, you can access information about your daily and monthly usage, see your payment history and pay your bill. You can even see your usage through the month before you are billed – all from clean, easy-to-use displays.

Member-owners can also take advantage of our Budget Billing Program, which allows you to keep monthly electric bills predictable and manageable. Please contact RVEC to sign up for this free option that averages electric use over a six-month period to avoid big fluctuations in monthly bills.

Should you have difficulty paying your electric bill in full, please contact us to review payment assistance resources and discuss payment options. Because RVEC is owned by the members we serve, our priorities are to provide

you with reliable, affordable and responsible power. Do not hesitate to contact us with your questions about energy efficiency and your power bill.

Managing reliability in extreme weather

A word about extreme weather and rotational outages or rolling blackouts. The effort to transition to intermittent renewable energy generation has led to some baseload coal and natural gas plants being idled or abandoned altogether. This shift increases the chance that in extremely cold weather, our power suppliers may be required to put RVEC on rolling blackouts. It could put some member-owners in an outage for around 45 minutes in an attempt to balance the power load – or demand – on the system to match available generation. This is not an emergency but rather an effort to prevent an emergency, which would be an uncontrolled outage over a widespread area.

We will continue to communicate with you during extreme weather events that could cause temporary rolling blackouts and remind you how to be prepared if they occur.

Again, if you ever have any questions, please contact our office. We are here to serve you!

Jim Gossett is the CEO of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative.



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RVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.





DON'T LET TURKEY DAY GOBBLE UP ELECTRICITY

Electricity use soars on Thanksgiving Day! We put our oven, stove, refrigerator and even our heating system into overdrive as we spend extra time cooking and hosting family in our homes.

Don't spoil the holiday fun by worrying about energy costs. Instead, try to conserve energy even as you overuse your appliances, lights and heat. Here are some tips:

- If your dining room has an older chandelier that doesn't use Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs, dim the brightness by at least 10%. If it doesn't have a dimmer switch, install one.
- Cook as many dishes as possible at the same time. If the recipes call for the same temperature, put two or three dishes in the oven together. That way, you can turn the oven off sooner.
- Lower your home's thermostat before you put the turkey in the oven. The heat the oven and stovetop emit – along with the heat that having extra people in the house creates – will keep your home warm without cranking up the thermostat.
- Cook what you can in the microwave or crockpot. They use less energy than the oven.
- Use the dishwasher instead of cleaning the dinner dishes by hand. Dishwashers use less energy and water than washing by hand.

LOOK UP, LOOK DOWN, LOOK OUT



Iowa's electric cooperatives want you to have a safe and productive harvest.

- Be extra careful and stay alert for hazards.
- Keep an eye out for overhead power lines and electrical equipment on and under the ground.
- Be especially careful with tall equipment such as combines and grain augers.

SHOW YOU CARE WITH RECare

Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative has established RECare, a program of members helping members. RECare provides funds to be distributed by local community action agencies to help pay winter heating bills and assist in the weatherization of homes of low-income members.

You may make a one-time contribution or a monthly pledge that will be added to your monthly electric bill. You may also make a contribution to part of a matching fund if there is one available. Even a dollar-a-month pledge will help others!



RECare Consumer Authorization Form

Yes, I would like to make a (check one):

One-time contribution of \$ _____
(My check is enclosed)

Monthly contribution of \$ _____
(That will be added to my bill)

My gift is a matching fund gift.
The matching fund is to be matched by:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip Code _____

Phone # _____

Email _____

Account # (if known) _____

HAVE A YUMMY AND SAFE THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving dinner marks the start of the winter holidays and can be a time for family, fun and fabulous food. It also creates a risk of kitchen fires.

Year-round, cooking starts more house fires and in-home injuries than any other activity. Increased cooking time around the holidays increases the chance of a fire. Some common culprits include unattended cooking, the use of cooking fryers and the increase in the amount of baking and cooking.

Here are some tips for safe Thanksgiving meal prep from the National Fire Prevention Association:

- If the stovetop burners are turned on, **you should be in the kitchen.**
- **Turkeys need to roast for hours.** Check it often while the oven is turned on.
- **Keep children 3 feet away from a hot stove.** Not only can they burn themselves on a working burner, but the splatter from steam, hot gravy and brewing coffee can be harmful.
- **Clean up before you cook.** Too much clutter in the kitchen – especially near the stove or on the floor – can cause people to trip, hot food to spill and small appliances or pans to fall over.
- **Don't leave knives out.** It might be inconvenient to take them out and put them away all day long, but that makes it harder for a child to pick one up or a cook's helper to brush against one accidentally.
- **Candlelight adds ambiance to the Thanksgiving table, but wait to light candles** until everyone is ready to sit down. And blow out the flames before you leave the room.
- **Check the batteries in your home's smoke alarms.** Simply push the test button and listen for a beep.



USE EMERGENCY GENERATORS WITH CARE

Over the past few years, more frequent and severe fall and winter storms have led more homeowners to invest in emergency backup generators. These generators can run a couple of appliances or keep the lights on when wind, rain and falling tree branches knock out the electricity.

Like any electric appliance, it's important to follow the manufacturer's safety instructions that come with your generator. But unlike other appliances, an improperly operated generator can harm or even kill a member of a line crew that is working on a downed wire in your neighborhood.

Here are some generator safety tips:

- Generators can produce carbon monoxide, an invisible, odorless and deadly gas. Never power up a generator indoors. Place carbon monoxide alarms in rooms of your house that are near where generators are operating.
- Never plug your generator into an electrical outlet. Instead, use extension cords to connect the appliance you want to run directly to the generator.
- Do not connect the generator to any of your home's electrical circuits. This requires a transfer switch and installing a transfer switch requires a licensed electrician.



STAY IN THE KNOW

At Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC), we constantly strive to improve our efficiency so we can provide the most reliable electric service possible for our member-owners (that's you!).

We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help. By making sure we have your most accurate and complete contact information, we can continue to provide the high level of service that you expect and deserve. Accurate information enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. It also allows co-op members to receive information about other important programs, events and activities.

Benefits of co-op communications

Up-to-date contact information can potentially speed up the power restoration process during an outage. For example, the phone number you provide is linked to your service address to our outage management system. This means when you call to report an outage, our system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage management system predict the location and possible cause of an outage, making it easier for our crews to correct the problem.

While we always do our best to maintain service, we occasionally plan outages to update, repair or replace equipment. In these instances, we can provide advance notification to affected members if we have your updated contact information.

Keeping the co-op updated with your information also helps us when there's a question about energy use or billing. Emails and text messages are also used to notify registered members of any changes in co-op event details. In addition, account discrepancies can be handled promptly if RVEC has accurate account information.

Many of you have been co-op members for years, and it's likely that your account information hasn't been updated for some time. We recognize that many members now use a cell phone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system.

Send us contact information changes

We will never share this information with any third parties. It is only used by RVEC to send important information to you. Please take a moment to review the information on your bill.

If you have any changes, please contact our office at 712-659-3649 or 800-253-6211. By doing so, you will be helping us improve service and efficiency so we can better serve you and all co-op member-owners.



POLE-TOP RESCUE

Once a month, employees hold a safety training and educational meeting at the office. The line crew practiced rescue operations during our September safety meeting.

Training for emergencies is part of ongoing safety practice for the Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative line crew.

We recently practiced basket rescue and pole-top rescue. This involves lowering a victim from the pole/basket by a rope. If needed, CPR is then administered once the victim is on the ground.



DON'T SHOOT AT POWER EQUIPMENT

Safety and power reliability are top priorities at Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC).

Each year, many power providers experience outages caused by people, either intentionally or inadvertently, shooting at important power equipment such as utility poles, line insulators, transformers and transmission towers.

The potential for bodily injury caused by shooting at live electrical equipment is even worse than the power outage.

Not only could the shooting result in injury or even death, but it also presents a risk to RVEC's line crews, who must repair the damages, and to member-owners who rely on the delivery of safe power for health care needs.

Shooting at power equipment is also vandalism and could result in fines and/or jail sentences.

If you are hunting or target shooting, we ask that you please be cautious not to shoot at any utility facilities. Further, if you notice this type of vandalism on cooperative lines, please contact the office.



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cooperatives.

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Visit our website at www.rvec.coop



REMEMBERING THOSE WHO HAVE LIFTED US UP

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Cooperatives