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Hot Watts

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Cookson members give generously to the community and those in need through Operation Round Up

Through Operation Round Up, members of Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative gave generously this holiday season. In December, the Cookson Hills Electric Foundation Inc. board approved funds for many community and civic organizations as well as individuals in need.

By allowing Cookson Hills Electric to “round up” their electric bills to the nearest dollar, members who participate in Operation Round Up are able to give these gifts to their communities for just pennies a month. The cooperative places all member contributions in a separate account, the Cookson Hills Electric Foundation.

The foundation has its own separate board made up of volunteers from

across the co-op’s system. The board administers the Operation Round Up funds, reviews applications and disburses the funds to eligible organization and individuals.

The board evaluates each application on its own merit; however, when applying for assistance or referring a needy individual, please keep in mind the Foundation does not help with utility bills.

Non-profit organizations and individuals living in Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative’s service area are eligible to apply for Operation Round Up grant assistance.

Applications for individual and non-profit, 501 (c) organizations seeking

assistance from Operation Round Up should contact **Cheryl Mills** at **1-800-328-2368**.

Places benefiting from Cookson members’ generosity in December

- Sequoyah County Child Welfare Council
- Haskell County Angel Tree
- Warner Fire Department
- Boys & Girls Club of Sequoyah County
- Roland Fire Department
- Kozie Quilts
- Brent Fire Department
- Webbers Falls Volunteer Fire Department

On behalf of Cookson 1339101 members, Round Up Coordinator Cheryl Mills, *left*, presents grant assistance for Haskell County Angel Tree. Accepting the funds are, *left to right*, Lisa Sloan, Christi Jones, Ronda Cole and Stephanie Orman.



Save money and conserve; go **green** in 2009

First step to savings: understanding your bill

Do you know how your home uses electricity? Learning how much electricity you're using and for what can help you reduce your usage and save money.

Cookson Hills Electric charges you for each kilowatt-hour — abbreviated kWh — you use. Here's what that means: A kWh is 1,000 watt hours. A watt hour is a unit of energy equivalent to one watt of power expended for one hour.

Your utility bill tells you how many kWh you used each month, along with the charge per kWh.

If you know the wattage of your appliances, electronic equipment and light bulbs, you can roughly determine how much it costs to operate each.

For example, if you burn a 60-watt light bulb for 10 hours, you will use 600 watt hours of energy, which equals 0.6 kWh. Multiply that by the cost per kWh that your electric cooperative charges, and you'll know just how much that light cost.

By keeping track of how often you use individual appliances, you can determine what percentage of your energy bill goes to powering each one every month.

Here's how to start saving energy at home today

1. *Fill up your refrigerator and freezer.*

Your refrigerator operates more efficiently when it's full because it can recover more quickly from the cold lost when the door is opened. Fill in empty spaces with water bottles or bags of ice. Leave just enough room between items for the air to circulate freely.

2. *Vacuum your refrigerator coils twice a year.*

If your refrigerator's coils are exposed (look on the back of the unit), they can get dirty or dusty and force your fridge to work inefficiently. If you have a newer model, remove the kick plate or grill to access the coils.

3. *Set your thermostat back when you*

leave for work. For every degree you turn down the heat for at least eight hours, you can save as much as 1 percent a year on your heating bills.

4. *Shut down your computer if it won't be in use for more than two hours.*

When you're finished using your computer, turn it off. Keeping it on is like leaving lights on in an empty room.

5. *Turn down the heat – on your water.*

Many water heaters are set to 140 degrees, which is hotter than necessary for showers and clothes washing. Water that hot also poses a scalding hazard for children. Reduce the temperature by 10 degrees and you'll save up to 5 percent on your energy costs.

Keeping warm with window treatments

Window treatments and coverings aren't just for decoration — they can also go a long way in saving energy. Some carefully selected window treatments, such as draperies and insulating panels, can keep heat from escaping through window panes in winter.

A drapery's ability to reduce heat loss depends on factors such as fabric type (closed or open weave) and color. **When drawn during cold weather most conventional draperies can reduce heat loss**

from a warm room up to 10 percent.

In winter, keep draperies that don't receive direct sunlight closed during the day, and close all draperies at night.

Draperies should be hung as close to windows as possible to reduce heat exchange and should fall onto a windowsill or floor. For maximum effectiveness, install a cornice at the top of a drapery, or place the drapery against the ceiling. Then seal the drapery at both sides with Velcro or magnetic tape, and overlap it in the center. **Such snug window treatments can reduce heat loss by up to 25 percent.**

An inexpensive insulating window panel or pop-in shutter, typically made of a core of rigid foam insulation, also reduces heat loss. The panels are made so that their edges seal tightly against the window frame, and they can be pushed or clipped into the interior of a window. No hardware, such as hinges or latches, is required.

Window treatments aren't effective at reducing air leakage or infiltration — caulk and weather strip around windows to reduce drafts. Also, draperies work best for winter weather. Window blinds are more effective at reducing summer heat gain than winter heat loss.

(Source: U.S. Department of Energy Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, eere.energy.gov)



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

To trim high heating costs, open draperies and shades on south-facing windows during the day to allow sunlight to enter your home. Close them at night to reduce the chill of cold windows.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy



About 15 percent of your energy bill is for heating water. Lower the temperature on the water heater to 120 degrees and wash clothes in cold water. Help your water heater work more efficiently by wrapping it in a \$20 insulation blanket.

Four ways to cut your water heating bills

Use less hot water.

Check for water leaks. A sudden spike in your water bill usually means you have a leak.

Wash clothes in cold water.

Turn down the thermostat on your water heater. It not only saves energy, it can save your family from injury. Lowering the water heater setting to 120 degrees can prevent scalding. It takes hot water just a few seconds to scald someone.

Insulate your water heater. For best results, wrap insulation around both the cold and hot water pipes entering the tank. The top and sides of the tank should also be insulated.

Buy a new, more efficient water heater. Newer models are far more efficient than old ones. Choose a water heater with an Energy Star label so you can compare its energy use — and cost — with similar models.

Protect your family from carbon monoxide poisoning

Often called the “silent killer” because of its odorless, tasteless, and colorless nature, carbon monoxide remains the leading cause of accidental poisonings in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **Each year, carbon monoxide poisoning claims nearly 500 lives and causes more than 15,000 visits to hospital emergency departments.**

Carbon monoxide can be found in combustion fumes, such as those produced by cars and trucks, small gasoline engines, stoves, lanterns, coal- and wood-burning stoves, gas ranges and heating systems.

Carbon monoxide from these sources can build up in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces, poisoning people and animals who breathe it.

Portable electric generators are a source of carbon monoxide poisoning if used improperly. Many people rely on these units during extended power outages, but special care must be used. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the misuse of generators caused five deaths and dozens of cases of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Symptoms: The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headaches, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion.

Prevention: Have your fuel-burning

appliances inspected by a trained professional at the beginning of every heating season.

Choose appliances that vent fumes outside whenever possible.

Read and follow all instructions that accompany any fuel-burning device.

Do not idle your car in a closed garage. Fumes can build up very quickly.

Never use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.

Never use a charcoal grill indoors or charcoal briquettes in a fireplace.

Do not sleep in any room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.

Do not use any gasoline-powered engines (mowers, weed trimmers, snow

blowers, chainsaws, small engines, or generators) in enclosed spaces.

Install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector in your home. Look for Underwriters’ Laboratory (UL) certification on any detector you purchase.

— by Chris Grammes

(Sources: Centers for Disease Control; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

SHORTS

If your TV receive broadcasts through an antenna, you will need to buy a converter box by Feb. 17, 2009. You can save \$40 on a digital-to-analog converter box with coupons available from the federal government. They're good toward the purchase of certain brands of converter boxes; your retailer will know which ones. Order your coupons — you can get two per household — from www.DTV2009.gov.

GO TO WWW.COOKSONHILLS.COM AND COMPLETE THE ONLINE SURVEY FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO WIN A \$10 CREDIT ON YOUR ELECTRIC BILL.

How to make the most out of your next doctor's appointment

— by Rachel S. Burke

No, it is not your imagination — visits with the doctor are shorter now than they used to be. Whether you are in for a routine visit, or a specific diagnosis, a little bit of planning can make your appointment more productive and can save you time and money in the long run.

Make a list of all medications you take, the dosage and time you take them, as well as what they are treating. Remember to include any over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and herbal supplements.

Also, remember to note any medications that need to be refilled soon.

Before your visit, **write down questions** you want to ask your doctor. If you are being monitored for a chronic condition (i.e. diabetes, high



blood pressure), note any changes in your condition since your last visit. If your medications were adjusted at your last visit, note your response to those as well.

Ask questions if you do not understand something. If you are given new information about a medication or condition, ask for material you can take home.

If you are asked a series of questions about your health and behavior, **be completely honest in your answers.** Remember, information you share with your doctor is private.

If your visit is for an acute injury or illness, **provide as much information as possible.** When did the problem start? What were you doing just before it happened? If you are having pain, describe it. Is it continuous or intermittent? How intense?

Ask about preventive screening tests you should have. For instance, if you are a woman over the age of 40, you should ask about scheduling an annual mammogram. Many serious conditions can be effectively managed when diagnosed in early stages.

New Year's resolutions to keep you healthy in 2009

Avoid fast food and eat at home. Prepare healthy meals ahead of time and keep them in the fridge or freezer for easy reheating when things get hectic.

Keep portions small. You don't have to avoid your favorite dishes. Just be careful not to overeat. Be sure to include healthier items like fresh fruits and vegetables alongside your favorite desserts.

Modify favorite recipes. Experiment with low-fat, low-calorie ingredients. The American Heart Association offers suggestions for recipes at www.americanheart.org.

Drink more water than your favorite soft drink or alcoholic beverage. Eight glasses of water a day will help you avoid seasonal colds and flu and stay healthy.

Get moving. Plan recreational events that will encourage you to stay active — walk the dog or park farther away from your destination. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Exercise when watching TV.

Hot Watts is published monthly by **Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc.** *Hot Watts* informs members in parts of seven Eastern Oklahoma counties about Cookson Hills' programs and issues. Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative continually strives to provide quality electrical service at a reasonable cost for its members.

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Cookson Hills welcomes members to submit photos, and articles which will be subject to Cookson Hills editing. Any submissions must be received before the 12th of the month prior to the publication date.

If You Find Your Account Number Hidden in This Issue of *Hot Watts* You'll Receive a \$25 Credit on Your Electric Bill