

January 2017

# Hot Watts

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

According to the Consumer Electronics Association, the average household owns 24 consumer electronics products, which are responsible for 12 percent of household electricity use. ENERGY STAR-certified audio/video equipment is up to 50 percent more efficient than conventional models.

Source: EnergyStar.gov

### Congratulations!

**Curtis Yargee**  
is our online  
survey winner.



CHEC's offices  
will be closed on  
January 2<sup>nd</sup> in  
observance of the  
New Year.

## Right-Of-Way Contracts for 2017

Right-of-way maintenance is an important task of utility companies so that they may provide reliable electric service. Regular inspections and maintenance of all overhead distribution lines in our seven county service area is a major ongoing project. CHEC's goals of decreasing power outages and outage duration time is directly linked to maintaining proper clearances within our right-of-ways. CHEC contracts with companies whose crews work year-round clearing trees, limbs, and debris away from power poles and electric lines in our right-of-ways.

CHEC has contracted with Wright Tree Service and West Tree Service to clear and maintain right-of-ways in our service



West Tree Service

territories throughout 2017. Wright Tree will focus on trimming yard trees and hot spots that demand immediate attention. West Tree will clear the right-of-way on all circuits at the Marble City Substation with use of their mechanical machinery and bucket trucks.

These crews working on your property are indeed doing work on behalf of CHEC. The contractor crews' vehicles should be identified by their company name, logo, or our CHEC logo on the door of their vehicle. If you have any questions concerning right-of-way, please call 800-328-2368 or 918-775-2211.



## Pole Inspections in Muskogee County

CHEC has contracted with Osmose Utilities Services, Inc. to inspect and treat power poles owned by CHEC in southern Muskogee County. The project will begin in early January and will continue for approximately eight weeks. Crews will be working from the Canadian River, north to Interstate 40 and west to the Eufaula Dam.

Osmose crews will inspect and test poles making sure they have the proper strength requirements. The poles that pass all strength requirements will be treated to prevent future decay. Those that do not have the proper strength requirements will be replaced. The process will involve excavating around the poles by inspection crews. Crews will need access to all poles that have been identified as needing inspection.

Pole maintenance can save money by reducing unnecessary replacement costs and by adding many additional years of service life to poles. This project will greatly enhance the reliability of CHEC's power system.

Osmose's vehicles will be identified by an Osmose logo on the door of the vehicle as well as a magnetic placard of CHEC's logo. They will have a letter identifying them as working on behalf of CHEC. Any questions regarding the project should be directed to Mark Blaylock, Director of Operations, at 800-328-2368.



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Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



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

# Safety Tips for Work Zones

Orange cones, flashing lights, and warning signs all indicate a work zone on the road ahead. Within these zones are men and women doing work like road construction, working on power lines, or trimming trees. Unfortunately, hundreds of these workers are injured every year from work and road hazards. Safe Electricity urges motorists to slow down and pay attention in work zones while driving.

"Keeping a safe distance between your car and the construction workers and equipment, driving the posted work zone speed limit, and using your four-way flashers when stopping or traveling slowly can help reduce accidents in work zones," says Molly Hall, executive director of the Energy Education Council's Safe Electricity program.

To help prevent fatalities and injuries, Safe Electricity recommends the following guidelines while driving:

- Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and traffic barriers, trucks, construction equipment, and workers.
- Be patient. Traffic delays are sometimes unavoidable, so try to allow time for unexpected occurrences in your schedule.
- Obey all signs and road crew flag instructions.
- Merge early and be courteous to other drivers.
- Use your headlights at dusk and during inclement weather.
- Minimize distractions. Avoid activities such as operating a radio or eating while driving.

When you are making travel plans, keep in mind that many states also provide road construction information on their respective department of transportation websites that can be consulted before starting a trip. If you know that you are going to be traveling through a work zone, give yourself a little extra time to get to your destination, or you can find an alternate route.

Be aware of the legislation in your area. Many states have hefty fines or even jail time for violating traffic laws in work zones.

"Power poles and electrical equipment line our streets and highways, and narrow roadways often require crews to place their equipment in traffic lanes," Hall says. "Their work activities are often taken for granted but benefit us all, and like everyone, they deserve a safe workplace. Be alert to utility crews and other work zone workers for their safety as well as yours."

Don't make the jobs of road workers, electric utility linemen, and tree trimmers more dangerous. Drive safely. For more safety information, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).



**COMING SOON!!!** CHEC will be launching a newly redesigned website during this winter season! Please like us on Facebook and watch for announcements later this winter. Until then you can continue to visit our website at [www.cooksonhills.com](http://www.cooksonhills.com) for information regarding your cooperative, or for payment or service information.

# Youth Tour Trip to Washington, D.C.

Each year, CHEC participates in the cooperative-sponsored National Youth Tour Program. The program provides rural electric cooperative students an opportunity to earn a trip to visit Washington, D.C., by writing an essay on a topic determined by the cooperative. This year's topic is "What do you find most interesting about rural electric cooperatives?"

Donna Rhodes, Youth Tour Coordinator, has visited or will visit area schools to share a presentation on the history of electric cooperatives and on the annual CHEC Youth Tour Essay Contest. Local high school teachers will administer the contest. Essays must be submitted by February 17, 2017. All essays will then be reviewed by a judge that is not employed by CHEC, who will select four finalists.

The four finalists will present their essays to the CHEC Board of Trustees and other special guests at the CHEC Youth Tour Banquet held in Stigler. The finalists will be presented with a plaque and Youth Tour trip details.

During the Youth Tour trip (June 9-15, 2017), students will join 1,500 other youth from across the nation in Washington, D.C. Participants will visit monuments and other attractions as well as visit Capitol Hill to learn more about how our government operates.

The Youth Tour contest information is presented by appointment only. If your school is interested in participation this year, please contact Donna Rhodes at 918-775-2211.



Picture courtesy of OAEC.

## Levelized Monthly Billing

If you don't like surprises, we may have the perfect plan for you. Levelized Monthly Billing does just that – it levels your monthly bill so that you do not have those "peak and valley" bills. Although Levelized Billing helps you better budget for your electric bill, it does not guarantee a constant recurring monthly bill. It does not reduce your electric bill, but will smooth out your charges and 1873001 help you manage your electric bill.

Our Levelized Billing recalculates your levelized billing amount each month by averaging your current bill plus the previous 11 months' bills. By doing so, this will help stabilize your payment amounts, but ensures that you do not rack up a large running balance in the event that you experience

several consecutive months of high usage. The program keeps a running balance of what you truly owe should you choose to cease participation on the Levelized Billing program.

There is no charge for using the Levelized Monthly Billing. This is a service that we provide to our members to make it easier for you to budget your electric bill and enjoy the peace of mind that comes from planning ahead. Members can sign up for Levelized Monthly Billing if they have at least one year of billing history, no more than two late payments, and no returned checks.

For more information about Levelized Monthly Billing, visit our website at [www.cooksonhills.com](http://www.cooksonhills.com) or call 800-328-2368.

## Operation Round-Up

Each month, members of CHEC join together to help meet the charitable needs of their neighbors by participating in the Operation Round-UP program. Operation Round-UP is a community outreach program that is funded by CHEC members who round-up their electric bills each month. The small change that results from "rounding up" monthly electric bills has made a big impact in the cooperative's seven-county service area.

The CHEC Foundation Board recently met on December 6, 2016. At the meeting, the board awarded grants to assist Sequoyah County Council for Children, Inc., Stigler Health & Wellness Center, Inc. for the Haskell County Angel Tree, and Gore United Methodist Church for their Food Pantry. The Foundation also approved grants for Trinity United Methodist Church for Kozy Quilters and Boys and Girls Club of Sequoyah County.

The CHEC Foundation Board meets every quarter to review applications. Individuals and community organizations throughout CHEC's service area are eligible to apply for an Operation Round-UP grant. The next meeting will be held on March 7, 2017, with applications due by February 10, 2017. For more information about Operation Round-UP or to obtain an application, visit CHEC's website at [www.cooksonhills.com](http://www.cooksonhills.com) or contact Donna Rhodes at 918-775-2211.



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# Energy Savings for Every Season

By Anne Prince

While saving money through greater energy efficiency may be a year-round objective for many consumers, the way to achieve this goal will vary by season. There are a number of factors that impact energy efficiency, including weather, the age and condition of the home, and desired comfort levels. During fall and winter months, when the outdoor temperature is chilly, consumers desire a warm home and seek to keep the cold air out. Conversely, in the spring and summer, the focus is on keeping the hot air from infiltrating cool abodes.

## **Fall and winter: keeping heat in**

To maintain a warm indoor environment in chillier weather, there are simple steps you can take to increase energy efficiency. Fall is a great time to examine seals on doors and windows to check for air leaks. Caulk and weatherstrip as needed to seal in warm air and energy savings. Similarly, examine outlets for air leaks, and where necessary, install gaskets around the outlet to prevent drafts. During the day, open curtains or drapes on south-facing windows to enable sunlight to heat your home naturally. Close curtains or drapes at night for an added layer of window insulation.

As the temperature drops lower with the onset of winter, schedule a service appointment for your heating system to ensure it is operating at an optimal level. Low-cost or no-cost steps for energy savings include taping or affixing heavy, clear plastic to the inside of your window frames to create an additional barrier against cold air. Ensure that the plastic is tightly sealed to the frame to help reduce infiltration. Use a programmable thermostat to set the temperature as low as is comfortable when you are home (ideally around 68 degrees). When you are asleep or away, turn the temperature down 10-15 degrees for eight hours. According to the Department

of Energy, this small adjustment can help you save approximately 10 percent a year on heating and cooling costs.

## **Spring and summer: keeping your cool**

During warmer months, energy savings and efficiency will require different measures, many of which are inexpensive. If you live in a climate that is cool, open your windows in the evening and turn off your cooling system while sleeping. In the morning, shut the windows and blinds to hold in the cool air. Where practical, plant trees and shrubs that provide shade in warm months and sunlight in winter. In addition to the aesthetic value, well placed trees can take heat gain from the sun and provide needed shade by creating a canopy for the house.

In extremely hot weather, your cooling system works harder to close the gap between the high outdoor temperature and the cool indoor thermostat setting. To lessen the difference in temperature between the two, and to lower cooling costs, set the thermostat as high as you can while maintaining your comfort level. Moreover, using a ceiling fan in conjunction with your air conditioning can allow you to increase the thermostat setting to approximately four degrees with no reduction in comfort levels.

During the hottest months, it's all the more critical to replace any remaining incandescent bulbs with LEDs. The waste heat from the old bulbs impacts energy use and creates wasteful and unwanted heat. Employ a programmable thermostat to adjust the settings a few degrees higher when no one is home or your family is sleeping.

To learn more about additional energy-saving tips and programs, contact CHEC at 800-328-2368 or visit our website at [www.cooksonhills.com](http://www.cooksonhills.com).

*Anne Prince writes on cooperative issues 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.*

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## **Safety First:** If you have a generator, know how to use generators safely.

### **Tips for Safe Generator Operation:**

Read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions.

- Never connect a stand-by generator into your home's electrical system.
  1. For a stationary generator – Have a professional install an approved generator transfer switch, which keeps your house circuits separate from the utility.
  2. For a portable generator – Plug your appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator.
- Set up and run your generator in a well ventilated area outside the home, away from your garage and away from doors, windows, and vents into your home. The carbon monoxide the generator produces is deadly.
- Start the generator first before connecting appliances.
- Use a heavy-duty extension cord to connect electric appliances to the outlet on the generator.

For more on safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org)

