



HOT WATTS

The value of electricity continues to shine

BY DERRILL HOLLY

How many of us remember dropping into a CHEC office with our parents and grandparents to pay the light bill? Whether you do that in person, by mail or online today, paying your monthly bill does a lot more than just keep the lights on.

Count up your televisions, desktop, laptop and tablet computers, printers, your gaming consoles, music and video players, personal assistant devices and kitchen appliances. Whether they get used every day or just occasionally, the electricity that keeps them working comes from CHEC.

If you've got a craft nook or workshop, the power tools and machines you use to cut and shape your projects are either plugged in or recharged from the outlets connecting your household wiring to CHEC.

You use electricity to run all these devices, and we still keep the lights on, use the stove, heating and air conditioning, and get hot water from tap. The good news is, even as we rely more on electricity, it's still a bargain, especially compared to other things we pay for regularly.

Continued on page 2

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If you find your account number hidden in this issue of the *Hot Watts*, you'll receive a \$25 credit on your electric bill.

Continued from page 1

A CLOSER LOOK AT ELECTRICITY'S VALUE

Since 2011, medical care, residential rental rates and education have increased at rates of 3 percent or more per year. Butter, meat and egg costs have been up by more than 1 to 2 percent annually, and even bread costs have risen better than a half point on average.

Electricity costs rise about 1 percent a year, but co-ops across the country have reported a decline in average residential use per household since 2010. That means we're doing more things with less energy.

Kilowatt hour use per household dropped by 8 percent between 2010 and 2016, slightly less than the 9 percent decline reported by all electric utilities, nationwide.

When it comes to value, electricity is a clear winner, and we're always looking for ways to work with you to make it even better. That's why CHEC urges energy efficiency, encourages you to look for ENERGY STAR® appliances, and promotes technology, designed to give members more control over their electricity use.

Energy performance dashboards, smart thermostats and power strips, and appliance settings that shift most water heating, laundry and dishwashing outside of peak rate periods help reduce the co-op's overall power demand. They also give you opportunities to control or even trim your monthly utility bills.

That's good for families, couples and individuals trying to live within their budgets. And it's going to become even more important as digital devices and internet-connected technologies become even more important in our lives.

The average home now has 10 Wi-Fi connected devices. That number is expected to explode to 50 by 2020. Technology and the gateways that keep it working use electricity, so you'll depend upon CHEC for more than the power that keeps the lights on. [1752905]

That's why we're always working to provide service that's reliable, keep it affordable, and make it even more valuable to our member — you, your family and your neighbors.

Derrill Holly 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.

News & Notes

- Beginning with March billing, residential accounts switch from winter rates to summer rates. Summer rates will remain in effect through November. During this time all energy usage is billed at 8.720¢ per kilowatt hour (kWh). If you have questions about rates, please call 800-328-2368 or 918-775-2211.
- CHEC is no longer part of the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives network of co-ops. This only affects members who were utilizing the Co-op Connections Card for discounts at pharmacies and local businesses.
- Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 11, 2018. Don't forget to set your clock forward one hour.

Don't Waste. Insulate!

Properly insulating your home reduces heating and cooling costs, and improves comfort. R-values measure a material's resistance to conductive heat flow. The higher the R-value rating, the greater the effectiveness of the insulation. Below are recommended R-values for areas of the home that should be insulated.

*Recommendations on R-values are subject to regional climate conditions.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

TYPES OF INSULATION

- Batt ● Foam
- Blow-in



1

DUCTWORK
Whether it's made of metal or plastic (PVC), insulated ductwork protects your investment in conditioned air year-round. Minimal R-values of 4.3 are recommended for blanket-style wraps secured with tape. Insulated ductwork rated at R-6 is also available.

2

EXTERIOR WALLS
There are multiple options for insulating exterior walls. Rock wool or fiberglass batts of R-13 to R-20 value are preferred behind drywall, but each inch of blown-in polyurethane foam insulation provides an R-value of 3.9.

3

BENEATH LIVING SPACE
Whether your home has a full basement, a crawl space or an attached garage, having an insulation value of R-19 under the living space floor will help increase comfort year-round.

4

SLAB FOUNDATION
Properly installed foam boards around the exterior edge of the slab of an existing home can reduce heating bills by 10 percent or more.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Test your refrigerator's seal by closing the door over a piece of paper (so that it's half in and half out). If you can easily pull the piece of paper out, your seal may need to be replaced or the latch may need to be adjusted.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

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Top five energy users in your home

By Anne Prince

While most homeowners would like to be more energy efficient and save money, often it feels overwhelming because many people don't know where to start. How can the average family use less energy, lower their utility bill and still meet their daily energy needs? To help jumpstart your effort, it is useful to know what the top energy users are in your home. With this knowledge, you can choose a path that works best for your family.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Agency, the top five energy users in U.S. homes are:

1. Space cooling
2. Space heating
3. Water heating
4. Lighting
5. Refrigeration

Together, home heating and cooling use the most energy and take the biggest bite out of your energy budget. On the bright side, there are ways you can achieve at least 10 percent savings by taking a few simple low-cost or no-cost steps.

- During cold weather, set your thermostat to 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
- During warm weather, the recommended indoor temperature is 78 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Cleaning the filters of your HVAC system can cut costs from five to 15 percent.
- Clean the coils around your electric baseboard heater to maintain maximum efficiency.
- Caulk and weather-strip around windows and doors to prevent heat from escaping to the outdoors.

No matter what the climate or time of year, proper use of a programmable thermostat can save you 10 percent on your monthly utility bill.

Shine the light on savings.

Take a fresh look at the lighting in your home. If you still use incandescent lighting, your light bulbs are operating at only 25 percent energy efficiency. Replacing your home's five most frequently used bulbs with Energy Star-certified LEDs can save you \$75 per year. Another easy way to save is to always turn lights off in rooms that are not being used.

Water heating efficiency

Just as it is energy-wise to insulate your roof, wall or floor, it also pays to wrap your hot water heater with an insulating blanket. This is all the more critical if you have an older unit. Make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions. For additional efficiency and savings, insulate exposed hot water lines and drain one to two gallons of water from the bottom of your tank annually to prevent sediment build-up.

Put cold hard cash back in your wallet

If your refrigerator was purchased before 2001, chances are it uses 40 percent more energy than a new Energy Star model. If you are considering an appliance update, a new Energy Star refrigerator uses at least 15 percent less energy than non-qualified models and 20 percent less energy than required by current federal standards. Regardless of the age of your fridge, there are additional steps you can take to save energy and money. For example, don't keep your refrigerator too cold. The Department of Energy recommends temperatures of 35 – 38 degrees Fahrenheit for the fresh food compartment and 0 degrees Fahrenheit for separate freezers (used for long-term storage).

Anne Prince writes on consumer and cooperative affairs 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.