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December 2010

Hot Watts

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Energy Efficiency *Tip of the Month*

When decorating, remember that outdoor “icicle” lights use more energy because they have more bulbs per linear foot than regular light strands. Consider using regular strands of energy-saving LED (Light Emitting Diode) lights. They use less electricity and last up to 100,000 hours.

Source: Alliance to Save Energy

Congratulations

Julie Daugherty of Muldrow is our online survey winner!

Office Closing

CHEC offices will be closed December 23rd and 24th in observance of Christmas.



CHEC offices will be closed December 31st in observance of New Years Day.

1991 Capital Credit Checks are in the Mail

This month, people who were members of Cookson Hills Electric in 1991 are receiving a check. Unlike other electric utilities, your cooperative exists to make sure your needs are always met. As a member you share in the profits in the form of capital credit refund checks.

The cooperative works hard every day to keep your rates as low as possible. However, it is sure nice to know that when there are profits, they go back to you, the member.

Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative Inc. Board of Directors has authorized the distribution of \$594,066.07 in capital credits to current and former members of the cooperative.

Checks will be mailed by the second week of December to active and past members for

the year of 1991. Capital credit distributions from member owned, not-for-profit utilities, like Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative are somewhat similar to the dividends paid to shareholders of investor-owned utilities.

Your rates are set to bring in enough money to pay operating costs, make payments on any loans and provide an emergency reserve. At the end of each year, we subtract operating expenses from the total amount of money collected during the year; the balance is the “margin.” This is allocated to each member based on the amount each member paid for electricity.



Staying Safe: Portable Generators

Portable generators are useful when temporary or remote electric power is needed, but they can be hazardous. **The primary hazards: Carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock or electrocution, and fire.** Read more about portable generator safety inside this issue, on page 4.

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.

Headquarters: P.O. Box 539
Stigler, OK 74462
Phone: 918-967-4614

Branch Office: P.O. Box 587
Sallisaw, OK 74955
Phone: 918-775-2211

Toll Free: 1-800-328-2368

Home Page: www.cooksonhills.com
E-Mail: marketing@cooksonhills.com

Cookson Hills Staff

Kendall Beck
General Manager

Eric Johnson
Assistant General Manager

Dalen Garner
Director of Operations

Juli Orme
Manager of Finance and Administration

Teresa Shaw
Office Manager

Brett Orme
Director of Engineering

Cookson Hills Board of Directors

William T. Mills President / District 4
Joe Falleur Vice President / District 3
Kenneth Kelley Sec.-Treas. / District 5
William R. Wilson Director / District 2
Ellis Sappington Director / District 7
Rocky Woods Director / District 1
Joe Ogle Director / District 6

Bill V. Wilkinson - Attorney

Larry Mattes - Editor

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 the *Hot Watts*
You'll Receive a \$25 Credit
on Your Electric Bill.**

Continuously Upgrading CHEC's Lines

While Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative (CHEC) is accomplishing a lot, the work goes on. Our crews are continuously upgrading lines in CHEC's service territory. CHEC and contractors have upgraded 14 miles of electric lines to three phase with over 280 new poles this year in Stigler, Nicut, Sallisaw, Muldrow, Keota, Vian, and Liberty. What does

all this mean to you, the member?

"Better reliability," says Brett Orme, Director of Engineering. "We need our infrastructure in place to feed our consumers and continue to be dependable and reliable. The challenge, which we successfully continue to meet, is keeping rates and costs down."



Photo by: Larry Mattes

With the close of 2010, the cooperative is focusing on the future. A new year brings a new work plan, and the projected system upgrades for CHEC's electric lines and line equipment. The cooperative will continue upgrading the technology system and AMR metering as well.

"We are pleased with what we set out to accomplish in 2010, and look forward to serving our members in 2011," Orme added.

Winter Storm Safety

Snow and ice storms are an inevitable part of the winter season. However, they can lead to downed power lines and outages. Remember the following tips to stay safe and warm should you find yourself in the dark after a severe winter event:

- Never touch a fallen power line, and assume all wires on the ground are electrically charged. Call Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative to report it immediately. Avoid contact with overhead lines during cleanup and other activities.
- In the event of an outage, an alternate heating source, such as a fireplace, propane space heater, or wood stove, may be used. Extreme caution should be taken.
- Plan to stay in an area of the home where the alternate heat source is located.
- Fuel and wood burning heating sources should be vented. Be sure to follow manufacturer's directions.

- Make sure carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors are working properly.
- Do not use a gas-powered oven for heating. A gas oven may go out or burn inefficiently, leading to carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Do not use a gas or charcoal grill inside the home. Do not use charcoal briquettes in the fireplace.
- If you use a portable generator to power a heating source, be sure the generator is located outside your house for proper ventilation. Do not use a generator in an attached garage. Follow manufacturer's directions for operating the generator.
- Take special care not to overload a generator. Use appropriately sized extension cords to carry the electric load. Make sure the cords have a grounded, three-pronged plug and are in good condition.

Cutting Electric Meter Seal Results in Fee

For many years electricians have been cutting meter seals and pulling electric meters to de-energize electric services in order to work or replace equipment in homes and businesses. Utilizing an electric meter as an “electric switch” to de-energize an electric circuit can be hazardous.

Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative has changed all of its meters to state-of-the-art AMR (Automated Meter Reading) meters. Pulling these meters must be done by cooperative personnel only. If you plan on having an electrician or heating and air contractor work on your service it is your responsibility to make sure they do not cut any meter seals or remove the electric meter. If you require a meter to be pulled to work on an electric service, we ask that you please call (918) 967-4614 to schedule a time to have the meter pulled by a CHEC employee.

In the case of a power outage where a member may want to connect a portable generator to their breaker box, CHEC encourages members to call for more information on how to ensure your portable



Courtesy Photo

generator is an asset, not an endangerment.

CHEC does not allow meter seals to be cut and or meters pulled by anyone other than a CHEC employee. If a CHEC representative finds a meter seal cut there will be a \$50 fee added to the member’s account. If the member calls in a cut meter seal there will be a \$25 reseal standard fee.

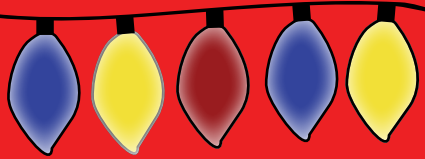
- Never run cords under rugs or carpets.
- Never connect generators to power lines. The reverse flow of electricity can electrocute an unsuspecting utility worker.

Call 911 immediately if you notice these symptoms. Have at least one telephone in the house that does not depend on electricity in the case of a power outage.

Ideally, your family will stay warm 248000 until the power comes back on. Keep an eye on family members for signs of hypothermia, which includes shivering, drowsiness, and mental and physical slowness. The elderly and young children are particularly vulnerable to hypothermia.



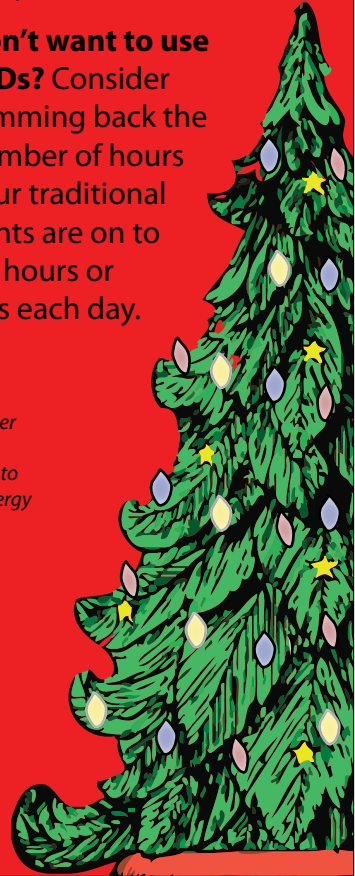
Courtesy Photo



Light up holiday savings with LEDs

Decorating with lights this holiday season? Consider light-emitting diodes (LEDs). They cost more initially but last twice as long as traditional lights, and you’ll recover the difference in three to four years.

- **Efficient.** LEDs use between 1 kWh and 3 kWh of energy, compared to between 12 kWh and 105 kWh for traditional lights, saving \$11 every holiday season.
- **Durable.** LEDs last about 4,000 hours. They’re also made of plastic and less likely to break.
- **Don’t want to use LEDs?** Consider trimming back the number of hours your traditional lights are on to six hours or less each day.



Sources:
Consumer Reports,
Alliance to Save Energy

Generator Safety: Our Lives are on the Line

The safety of you, our members, and our employees is a top priority at Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative (CHEC), especially during dangerous times. When storms hit our area, we rush to your aid as soon as weather conditions allow our linemen to travel and make repairs safely.

Our line crews take necessary precautions before they work on downed power lines. First, they verify a circuit has been de-energized, and that proper switches are opened and tagged to isolate the circuit from the system. They place ground chains on the circuit, on both sides of workers, to make sure the line cannot be energized while work is being done.

Portable generators, widely used when power lines are down, can prove fatal to linemen and your neighbors when used improperly.

CHEC employees are not the only ones in danger when a portable generator is used improperly. Generator owners themselves may be at risk of electrocution, fire injury, property damage, or carbon monoxide poisoning if they do not follow the necessary safety rules.

Portable generators can be very helpful

to consumers during outages. We urge you to follow these safety guidelines when using one:

1. Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring unless your home has been wired for generator use. This can cause back feeding along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including linemen making repairs. Have a licensed electrician install the equipment necessary to safely connect emergency generators to your home.

2. Always plug appliances directly into generators. Connecting the generator to your home's circuits or wiring must be done by a qualified, licensed electrician who will install a transfer switch to prevent back feeding.

3. Use heavy duty, outdoor rated extension cords. Make sure extension cords are free of cuts or tears and the plug has three prongs. Overloaded cords can cause fires or equipment damage.

4. Ensure your generator is properly grounded.

5. Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting it down.



6. Keep the generator dry. Operate it on a dry surface under an open structure.

7. Always have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby.

8. Never fuel a generator while it is operating.

We encourage you to protect the well-being and safety of your family during outages, and safeguard those who come to your aid during emergency situations. When we work together for safety and the good of our communities, we all benefit. If you install a generator at your service location please notify CHEC at 918-967-4614 or 800-328-2368

The Hot Watts Q&A

Question: What are the stipulations that must to be met to enroll in average monthly billing?

Answer: Members may sign up for average monthly billing, if they have at least one year of billing history, and no more than two late payments and no returned checks within the previous 12 months. There is no charge for being on the average monthly billing program. This is a service that we provide to our members to make it easier to budget their monthly expenses.

With average monthly billing, you will know what to expect on your electric bill because the amount will be approximately the same amount month after month, throughout peak cooling and heating periods. Call your local office today to sign up.



**BY SPENDING
A FEW
MINUTES,
I'M SAVING
A LOT.**

I'm saving \$82 a year by changing my home's air filter regularly. What can you do? Find out how the little changes add up at TogetherWeSave.com.

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TOGETHERWESAVE.COM