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Hot Watts

Published monthly by Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Be merry and bright, but don't let your holiday lights shine all night. Save money on your electric bill by installing a light timer for your decked out home. It can help lower your electric bill and reduce energy consumption. Use a manual timer plugged into an electrical outlet to automatically turn lights on and off as scheduled.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Congratulations!



Gary Pruitt is our online survey winner.

CHEC offices will be closed December 24th and 25th in observance of Christmas.

Capital Credit Checks in the Mail

As December approaches each year, Cookson Hills Electric (CHEC) members anticipate the arrival of their capital credit checks. This month, members—past and present—who received CHEC



electric service in 1995 will be receiving a capital credit check.

The CHEC Board of Trustees has authorized the retirement and distribution of \$716,331.43 in capital credits for the year of 1995. Checks will be mailed in early December.

Those that have signed a membership agreement for electric service from Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative are members. Capital credits reflect each member's ownership in and contribution of capital to the cooperative. Investor-owned utilities pay a portion of their profits to shareholders – people who may or may not be customers. Electric cooperatives return the margins or profits to the members – the people who actually use and support cooperative services.

Member-owned not-for-profit electric cooperatives set rates to generate enough money to pay all operating expenses. At the end of each year, the cooperative subtracts operating expenses from the operating revenue

collected during the year. The balance is called an operating margin. Margins are allocated to members as capital credits based on how much electricity you purchased during a particular year.

If you were a member in 1995 and you do not receive a capital credit check this month, please contact our office at 800-328-2368.

Did You Know?

Electric cooperatives have retired \$12 billion to members since 1988—\$814 million in 2013 alone. Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues, called margins, are allocated and retired to members in the form of capital credits.

\$814 million
in 2013

\$12 billion
since 1988

Source: National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation

Energy Efficiency

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Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc. welcomes members to submit photos, and articles which will be subject to editing. Cookson Hills reserves the right to publish or modify any article. Companies and individuals featured in the Hot Watts newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official policy, position, or view of Cookson Hills.

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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

Give your Electric Bill a Break this Holiday Season

The holidays are often filled with the festive colors of red, gold, and green. You can fill your home with a little more “green” this holiday season by giving your electric bill a break.

One way to save energy is to shut off the decorations that use electricity when they are not needed. For example, turn off lights during the daylight, when you are away from home, and before you go to bed. Consider investing in a timer that will automatically turn on and off your lights at a set time.

You can also use battery operated decorations. The fewer decorations plugged in, the less energy used. Keep in mind that rechargeable batteries are more cost effective and efficient than disposable ones. Additionally, consider using other decorations that do not require electricity. You can use garlands of popcorn, reflective ornaments, tinsel, ribbons, and wreaths to help decorate more efficiently.

The Energy Education Council offers additional tips on how to cut electrical costs during the holidays:

- Lower the thermostat. Energy use is reduced for every degree dialed down. Turn down the thermostat when you are away from home, and keep it to the lowest comfortable level when you are home. Installing a programmable thermostat to automatically adjust the temperature can help with this.
- Make sure the furnace and heaters are in good working order, and clean or replace your furnace filter every month to save energy and improve heat circulation.
- Seal leaks between door frames and windows with weather stripping or caulking. There may be gaps that contribute to the loss of heat in your home.
- Unplug appliances not in use. Many appliances still use energy even when off. Consider investing in power strips or smart strips.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with LED or CFL bulbs. These bulbs use less energy and last substantially longer.
- Take advantage of natural sunlight by opening curtains or blinds during the day to let the sun warm your home, but be sure to close the curtains at night to prevent the winter chill from coming in through the window glass.
- If you have a fireplace, that is a great way to naturally warm your home, but be sure to do so with caution. After use, remember to close the flue damper to prevent drafts.

If you plan on purchasing electronics as gifts for loved ones, be sure to look for the blue Energy Star label. Energy Star products can use up to 70 percent less energy and can last up to 10 times longer than other products, according to Energy Star.

For more tips on energy efficiency, visit EnergyEdCouncil.org.



Reliability Remains on Track for Members

Lower-than-normal coal stockpiles at Associated Electric Cooperative's coal plants are not affecting reliability for members systems; however, it is increasing the cost to serve members. CHEC purchases power from AECI.

"We don't believe this is a reliability issue. It's a cost issue," said CEO and General Manager Jim Jura. "We have been in coal conservation mode three and half months, and it's projected to continue."

Nationwide, railways are struggling to deliver enough coal to maintain, let alone build up, stockpiles that have been low most of the year. Contributing factors include the 2014 polar vortex that increased load and coal burn; early summer flooding; increased demand for rail shipment by intermodal, crude oil and grain producers; and rail crew and resource constraints.

Reliability, though, is not in question. AECI has diverse, plentiful resources to meet members' energy needs. Although more expensive to operate, AECI's natural gas plants are reliable and have among the nation's best starting reliability. AECI also is well-positioned with five gas pipelines. "We know our members want reliability, affordability and stability," Jura said.

Coal conservation costs

Coal conservation is costing AECI millions of dollars, including higher coal handling costs due to inconsistent deliveries.

AECI began coal conservation mid-June, lowering generation on all five coal units during off-peak hours, mainly overnight, when the electricity is not needed by members.

Operating the units at less than full load affects the efficiency of the units and increases costs, said Bill Alkier, fuels supervisor at AECI.

To date, AECI has not done significant switching to gas generation to serve members. It's too costly, and that's not a cost AECI's members should bear.

AECI, like the other utilities, has no contractual remedies to recover its costs. But, the railway doesn't get paid for coal it doesn't deliver. "Coal is still a big portion of the railway's business," said Alkier.

Looking down the track

Winter is around the bend, and AECI is taking steps to winterize its gas plants to prevent issues experienced last winter. Although the polar vortex tested AECI's system, the cooperative fared better 226400 than most utilities and is investing to correct problems, Jura said.

In addition, AECI is buying natural gas for winter months, hedging against natural gas price volatility. Each week staff re-examines AECI's gas exposure and can secure fixed price physical gas supply for near-term exposure.

Coal remains precious cargo

Utilities across the country are dealing with low coal stockpiles, not just AECI. Low natural gas prices in 2012 lowered demand for coal, so railways did not begin ramping back up until 2013. Meanwhile, flooding and the polar vortex slowed their recovery. Demand increased from other sectors too.

AECI expects to be in conservation mode through the upcoming winter.

New Pay Option Coming Soon

CHEC will soon offer another 24 hour payment option. Kiosks will soon be installed at the drive-thru's at the Stigler and Sallisaw offices. The kiosks will allow members the option to make cash, credit card, or debit card payments 24 hours a day.

In addition to the kiosks, members already have 24 hour payment access through our Secure Pay phone number 888-678-1937, through SmartHub via our website (www.cooksonhills.com), and through the SmartHub app on your electronic mobile device.

We also continue to offer members the traditional payment methods:

- Mail
- In person
- Automatic bank draft
- Automatic credit/debit card

We will continue to update you on the progress of the kiosk installations. Please watch our website and our Facebook page for announcements. If you have questions regarding any of these payment options, please call us at 800-328-2368 (Stigler), or at 918-775-2211 (Sallisaw).



Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees and Employees wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

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CHEC offices will be closed Wednesday, December 24th and Thursday, December 25th in honor and in celebration of Christmas. The offices will also be closed Thursday, January 1st in celebration of New Year's Day.

WATT'S COOKING?



Cranberry Salad by DJ Roberts-McDuffie

1 large pkg. raspberry jello
2 cups boiling water
2 cups sugar
1 qt. pkg. cranberries chopped fine
1 orange cut and sectioned
1 apple chopped
1 cup chopped pecans
1 cup small marshmallows



Dissolve jello in boiling water, let cool and thicken slightly. In a separate container stir sugar and cranberries together; set aside while jello cools. Add remaining ingredients and stir all into jello mixture.

Pour salad into a mold and refrigerate; place topping in the center before serving. Or you can spread

topping over all and sprinkle a small amount of crushed pecans over the top.

Topping: Beat 4 oz. of cream cheese with mixer. Add 8 oz. of whipped topping and 2 cups of powdered sugar. Fold together until well mixed.