

February 2016

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Hot Watts

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Save energy and money by lowering your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. This will also slow mineral buildup and corrosion in your water heater and pipes.

Source: energy.gov

Congratulations!

Steve & Lisa Hall are our online survey winners.

Happy  Valentine's Day!

Right-of-Way Contracts for 2016

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 Wolf Tree, Inc., Wright Tree Service, and Progressive Solutions, LLC, to clear and maintain right-of-way in our service territories throughout 2016. Wolf Tree is

equipped to clear right-of-way utilizing a variety of specialized equipment as they work from substation to substation. Wright Tree focuses on trimming yard trees and hot spots that demand immediate attention. Progressive Solutions will be spraying the brush under the electric lines, using products that will control the growth of brush and trees.

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.



Scholarship Deadline Approaches

March 18th will be the last day to submit applications for the Herman Driscoll Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship committee will award four \$500 scholarships to area high school seniors planning to attend college or technical school.

Applications and guidelines may be obtained at the CHEC offices or through our website at www.cooksonhills.com under "Our Community." If you have any questions, please contact Felicia Williams at 800-328-2368.



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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**

Will EPA's Clean Power Plan threaten electric reliability?

By Paul Wesslund

** Effects on transmission grid being studied - report to be released this year*

Since the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its Clean Power Plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in August, several objections have been raised – from its effect on the economy to whether it actually has the authority to regulate carbon dioxide emissions.

An especially significant concern came from the organization responsible for making sure our electricity stays on. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), reacting to a 2014 draft of the EPA plan, said in April 2015 that the electric utility industry “needs more time to develop coordinated plans to address shifts in generation and corresponding transmission.”

NERC cited concern about the electric transmission grid, noting that some of the emission reductions would begin in the year 2020, even though, NERC said, “transmission projects require between six and 15 years to engineer, site, permit and construct.”

EPA's final rule released in August responded to that concern by extending the deadline two years, setting a 2022

start date and phasing in the limits through 2030. Is that enough time? NERC responded in a statement that acknowledged the EPA had changed its deadlines and that NERC will analyze the EPA's final rule and issue a report in mid-2016.

Among those challenging the EPA rules in court is the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), concerned that the Clean Power Plan would hurt electric reliability and raise costs for electric co-op members. “We believe the EPA has overstepped its legal authority with the Clean Power Plan, and, along with many other interveners, have challenged [the] EPA's rules in the courts,” says Paul McCurley, NRECA chief engineer and acting executive director of Energy and Power. “If the legal challenge is successful, then perhaps we can get [the] EPA to write regulations that address more than just environmental concerns – but also consider economic impacts to consumers and do not threaten the reliability of the electric grid.”

Paul Wesslund 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.



If not used and disposed of properly, Mylar balloons can cause electrical hazards for people and dangerous and expensive damage to power equipment.

- *Always tie the balloons down or use a weight.*
- *Never attach a metallic ribbon to these balloons, and never tie them to children's arms.*
- *Deflate and poke holes in the balloons before recycling them.*
- *If a Mylar balloon is in contact with a power line, never attempt to remove it yourself.*

Always contact your local utility to remove any objects tangled in power lines.

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

Adjust the temperature

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 5 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).

By understanding how your home uses energy, you can determine the best ways to modify energy use and keep more money in your wallet.

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.



Congratulations Brett!

Brett Orme, Director of Engineering at CHEC, has recently accepted the position of CEO at Kiamichi Electric Cooperative, Inc. Brett has been apart of the CHEC family since 2001 and his final day at CHEC was January 22nd. CHEC would like to congratulate Brett on his new position.

Are you using SmartHub?

CHEC offers the latest technology to help you manage your electric account 24/7 by computer, smartphone, or tablet with a free application called SmartHub. SmartHub is an application that is available in both mobile apps and in a web version.

With SmartHub, you can:

- Make a secure payment
- Check your daily or hourly electric usage
- Notify member services of account issues
- Receive alerts by email
- Communicate directly with your cooperative
- View bills
- See payment history
- Set up recurring payments
- Report outages



The web version has a profile page available for members to maintain their personal information, password, and security phrase. Go to our website www.cooksonhills.com to register your accounts.

The mobile apps can be downloaded and installed on your compatible mobile phone or tablet. Simply look for "SmartHub" in the Apple Store or in the Android Market. If duplicates appear, look for the app provided by our partner, National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC). The app is free to download and install.

Members making payments through SmartHub will be charged a \$3.95 convenience fee.

If you aren't using SmartHub, consider starting today. SmartHub is a convenient method of payment and communication, and a great way to help you monitor your electric usage. If you have any questions concerning SmartHub, please contact your local office at 800-328-2368 (Stigler) or 918-775-2211 (Sallisaw).

Watt's Cooking



Meat & Potato Casserole

1 lb. lean ground beef	3 cups thinly sliced potatoes
1 onion, chopped	1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 tsp garlic powder	½ cup stock
1 tsp paprika	¼ cup milk or cream
Salt and pepper to taste	1 ½ cups shredded cheese



Preheat oven to 350 degrees and lightly grease an 11x7 glass baking dish.

In medium frying pan, cook the onions and ground meat until done. Drain the grease. Add the seasonings and some pepper.

In a medium bowl, mix together the soup, stock, milk, salt, and pepper.

Layer into the baking dish half of the potatoes, then pour some soup over them. Then sprinkle in half the meat, then the cheese.

Repeat with the rest of the potatoes, soup, meat and then the cheese.

Cover with lightly greased aluminum foil (so the cheese doesn't stick to it) and bake for 1 to 1 ½ hours or until the potatoes are tender.