NOW'S THE TIME

Our Energy, Our Future

Manager's Column

Last month, the American people took to the polls and chose our policy makers and local elected officials. The elected leaders of the nation and Wisconsin will be faced with many challenges related to natural disaster recovery, national and state economic stability, and a host of other issues — both known and unknown.

Central to these challenges is the future of power supply. As electric cooperatives strive to meet our present and future energy needs, we must continue to ask our elected leaders questions that focus on issues of capacity, technology, and affordability so that we all continue to enjoy safe, reliable, and affordable electric power.

Today, many policy makers and elected officials believe renewable energy, like wind, solar, and biomass (tree trimmings, farm byproducts, animal waste, and landfill gas), provide the solution to addressing climate change and establishing energy independence. But to keep the lights on and electric rates affordable, electric cooperatives will need to make use of all available generation resources, including renewables, nuclear power, and fossil fuels like coal and natural gas that use the latest environmental technology.

Our nation's electric system, commonly referred to as the "grid," relies on a network of power plants, transmission lines, and distribution facilities woven together in an intricate web to provide us with electricity. When a piece of this puzzle doesn't fit or goes missing, brownouts and blackouts can occur — as many folks in the Northeast remember from August 2003, or those in the West recall twice during the summer of 1996.

Over the next 22 years, demand for electricity is predicted to increase 30 percent, and our country has used up the excess power capacity it once had available. That means we will need to build new power plants, all at a time when costs for construction materials such as steel, copper, and concrete, and fossil fuels like natural gas and coal are skyrocketing. The challenges we face are immense.

As a result, electric cooperatives are urging lawmakers to invest in technology that will allow us to help all households become more energy efficient, fast-track plans for building new transmission lines — connecting rural regions where renewable electricity is generated to the population centers where it's consumed — cut through the red tape that prevents construction of new nuclear power plants (which emit only clean water vapor), and capture and permanently store carbon from coal-fired power plants (as a way to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions blamed for contributing to global climate change).

These steps will not only strengthen our nation's electric infrastructure and head off an impending electric power crisis, but significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions. Even better, they will help ensure that any climate change goals ultimately adopted remain politically and economically sustainable over the decades necessary to make a difference.

Our Energy, Our Future
A Dialogue With America

Now's the time to make your voice heard. Electric cooperatives are currently engaged in a grassroots campaign called "Our Energy, Our Future: A Dialogue With America." Nearly 1.3 million letters and e-mails have already been sent to Congress by your fellow member-owners from all across the United States, each asking critical energy questions. To join the effort, visit www.ourenergy.coop.

In partnership with the federal government, electric cooperatives met the greatest engineering challenge of the 20th century — spreading the benefits of electric power to the most remote corners of our nation. The time has come once again for Congress to step up to the plate and make certain we continue to enjoy the electric service we've come to expect at a price we can afford. ■

Holiday Hours

Our offices will be closed on Thursday, December 25, to celebrate Christmas with our families. We will be open regular hours on Friday.

Our offices will also be closed on Thursday, January 1, in observance of the New Year. We will be open regular hours on Friday.

Clark Electric Cooperative and Focus on Energy

focus on energy℠

The power is within you.

A Powerful Partnership for Efficiency

Beginning January 1, 2009, Clark Electric Cooperative will be a partner in the statewide Focus on Energy initiative — meaning you, our member, will soon be able to access the valuable services and financial assistance provided through this program. In addition, we can all benefit by increasing energy efficiency and being better positioned to control rising energy costs through programs that help manage our state's growing demand for energy.

Focus on Energy works with eligible residents, farms, and businesses to install cost-effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, resulting in millions of dollars in energy savings for Wisconsin customers each year.

What can Focus on Energy offer to our members?

- A wealth of energy-efficiency tips and information to help you learn more about what you can do to start saving energy today.
- Assistance with identifying high-efficiency products and local service providers qualified to make energy-efficiency upgrades to your home or business.
- Technical expertise to help guide complex or innovative projects, such as renewable energy installations, from start to completion.
- Financial incentives that help offset the cost of eligible projects.

The Focus on Energy program, coupled with the cooperative's demand side management options, provides our members with the tools needed to be proactive in managing their energy costs.

"Focus on Energy's resources and financial incentives aim to help implement projects that otherwise wouldn't be completed, reduce the initial cost of efficiency measures, and complete projects sooner than scheduled," said Tim Steward, CEO/general manager of the cooperative. "The Focus on Energy program, coupled with the cooperative's demand side management options, provides our members with the tools needed to be proactive in managing their energy costs."

Clark Electric Cooperative members will become eligible for electricity-saving services and incentives effective January 1, 2009. To learn more about what Focus on Energy has to offer you, call 800.762.7077 or visit www.focusonenergy.com.

HELPING MEMBERS

Understand Portable Electric Heaters

There have been a number of portable and hard-wired electric heaters introduced to the marketplace in response to high home heating fuel costs. With the vast number of electric heater styles, shapes, and sizes on the market, it's no wonder that consumers are confused when shopping for the right one to fit their needs. Don't be misled by cleverly worded ads that suggest one heater may be more efficient than a competitors's. All electric heaters, except ultra high-efficiency heat pumps, provide 100 percent efficiency, and watt for watt, cost the same to operate.

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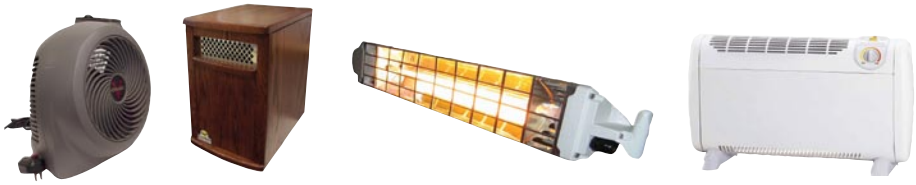
Electric Heaters

(Continued from page 5)



Three Main Heater Designs

The first step is to understand that there are three main heater categories. The first category is the high-temperature radiant style. These units are characterized by the glowing red heating elements and shiny mirrored reflector behind the coils. Radiant heaters don't attempt to heat the air, but rely on "beaming" their warmth directly to people or objects in the room. Just like the sun's warmth, it can be a very pleasing form of heat.

The second category is the natural convection style, which transfers heat differently. Instead of using red-hot coils, these heaters distribute the same amount of heat over a wider surface of the heater. This allows the flow of air over the surface (natural convection) to transfer heat to the air. Often seen in a long slender baseboard design, these heaters are warm to the touch but not hot enough to burn you. Other convective heaters are shaped like old-fashioned cast-iron radiators, as found in historic buildings. An oil-like fluid inside spreads the heat around the surface. On a watt-for-watt equivalent, natural convection heaters put out just as much warmth, but you don't feel the intense heat as from a radiant design.

The third category, fan forced heaters, relies on a blower to push air over the heating coils. Designed like a "mini furnace," these heaters must warm the air in the room to increase comfort. Unlike the natural convection style, they don't rely on a large surface area to transfer their heat to the air. A quick clarification — small fans are sometimes used in radiant heaters too, as a way to circulate the air. Don't let the presence of the fan fool you; if most of the heat radiates out from visible glowing coils, it's a radiant heater.

What Does It All Mean?

Each of the three designs described above uses a process called "electric resistance heating." Because all electric heaters use this same process, they all have the same efficiency — 100 percent. There are no losses. Whatever the heater's shape or size, the amount of heat coming out is the same as the amount of electricity going in. Therefore, any two heaters with a rating of 1,500 watts on the nameplate will deliver the same amount of heat, no matter what they look like. To calculate the hourly cost of operating an electric heater, consider the following:

What is different is the method used to transfer the warmth from the heating elements to the person or objects that need it. Any of the three portable electric heater types can allow room by room variation in temperature. This zonal heating method can save energy, but only by lowering the setting on the home's central heating thermostat. Then in the occupied room, a space heater is used to boost the temperature to a comfortable level.

If you wish to utilize electric heat, we encourage you to employ our load management system to shift on-peak usage to off-peak usage. If you have an automatic backup heating source or storage heat system, you could qualify for a reduced dual fuel rate. By utilizing this approach, you not only save money, but you also help keep costs down by avoiding peak times.

Source: National Food and Energy Council; Richard Hiatt, author

A (amps) x V (volts) = W (watts)

W (watts)/1,000) x (hours of use/day) x (number of days used) x (electric rate)

Example using 12.5 amp space heater:

12.5 amps x 120 volts = 1,500 watts

1,500 watts/1,000 x 4 hours per day x 30 days x .0925/kwh = $16.65/month

Energy Scams

Don't Get Burned by Them

By Christine Grammes

The devices could not be simpler — small gray boxes that plug into an electrical outlet in the home. The accompanying advertising insisted that these products, costing up to $300, could shrink electric bills by 10 percent and reduce energy consumption by 25 percent. In times of rising energy prices, who wouldn't want to try them?

In May 2008, the Texas Office of Attorney General took legal action against the firm offering what it called the Xpower Energy Saver or Mega Power Saver, which sell for $200 and $300, respectively. A lab at the University of Texas at Austin tested the units and concluded that they could not live up to their promises.

In addition, the lab revealed that the products are, in reality, ordinary capacitors. Capacitors are regularly used by electricians, and they can be purchased for less than $20.

Electric cooperatives warn consumers to beware of such claims.

"When energy prices go up, people get flooded with ads about gadgets and gizmos that claim to save money," comments John Knox, director of member relations.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) also warns consumers to be careful about marketers or home-improvement contractors aggressively trying to sell energy-saving products. According to the agency, consumers should look carefully and check independent information — such as from state or local consumer protection offices like the Better Business Bureau — about companies selling such items.

"Don't fall for high-pressure sales pitches from contractors or door-to-door sales people," says the FTC.

Smith reminds consumers of the role that electric cooperatives can play in helping them to lower energy costs. ■

REBATES FOR LED Christmas Lights

Clark Electric Cooperative will be offering a rebate on LED Christmas lights **purchased before 11/30/08.** To receive the rebate, a receipt must sent with the request.

A credit of $2 per string of lights will be applied to your electric bill.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Clark Electric Cooperative
715-267-6188
800-272-6188

After-Hours Emergencies
800-927-5707

Digger's Hot Line
811
800-242-8511

Tim Stewart, CEO/Manager
John J. Knox, Editor
124 N. Main Street
P.O. Box 190
Greenwood, WI 54437
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner
e-mail us at info@cecoop.com or at jknox@cecoop.com
WWW.CECOOP.COM

Clark Electric Appliance & Satellite, Inc.
715-267-6544
715-279-6544

After-Hours Emergencies