

## Bills, Unfortunately, May Go Higher



**MESSAGE  
FROM  
MANAGER  
LEROY T.  
SKLOSS**

**F**or the next couple of years, energy experts have warned, supplies of electricity and natural gas look tighter in Texas, and the state's consumers can expect to pay more for their power.

This news, from a November story in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, isn't surprising to those of us who work in the electric industry. Environmental concerns and stricter regulations have slowed the building of power plants. Extreme weather and a growing population have put more demand on plants that already exist.

The amount of wind and solar power produced in the state, while growing, still isn't enough to fill the supply gap. When demand grows and supply dwindles, basic economics tell us that prices will rise.

For customers of the state's for-profit electric companies, there is another component of price—the pressure on those companies' CEOs and boards of directors to grow revenue and create dividends so shareholders can be paid. Thus, a portion of the bills that their customers pay ends up in a stockholder's pocket.

That's a factor that the leaders of Karnes Electric Cooperative don't have to consider. My mission, and that of the cooperative's directors,

who are all fellow co-op members, is to bring you a reliable supply of electricity at the best possible price. Period. You won't see a markup on your bill to create profit for shareholders, because the co-op operates on a not-for-profit basis. You, the members, are its owners.

If the price of natural gas rises, electricity generators that burn gas to run turbines will pass the increased cost of fuel along, which you will see reflected in the power cost recovery factor of your bill. The cost you see there is exactly the cost the generating entity charges us. We don't tack on any extra charges.

We do aim to run the co-op to bring in more money than is needed to simply pay the bills. The positive cash flow indicates a healthy business and is a necessary requirement for the bond and loan markets.

Some of that money is used to maintain and improve the system of wires and equipment that delivers electricity to you and to build lines for new members.

That income over expenses, which we call margins, goes back as an investment in the cooperative and, eventually, is returned to you as capital credits.

We want to charge you as little for electricity as we can and still run a strong business. But some price increases cannot be avoided.

We can always hope that the forecast for higher rates is wrong. But if it's not, and your energy bill becomes a problem for you, please call Karnes Electric Cooperative at (830) 780-3952. We'll see what we can do to help.



## Happy New Year

**FROM KARNES  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**



*We wish you and yours a happy,  
healthy and prosperous 2012.*

*The offices of Karnes Electric  
will be closed Monday,  
January 2, in observance  
of New Year's Day.*

**WANT TO LOWER YOUR ELECTRIC BILL?**

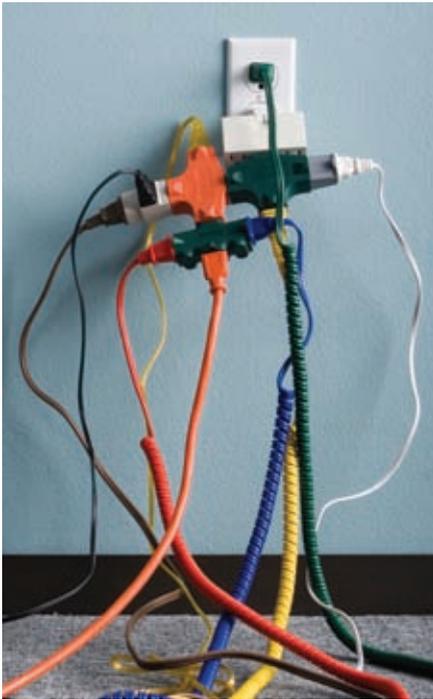
Visit [www.karnesec.org](http://www.karnesec.org) for great energy conservation tips.

# Put Electrical Safety at Top of Resolutions List

**P**rotecting your family from electrical shocks, tripping hazards and house fires is easier to do than losing 20 pounds or quitting smoking. So make it New Year's resolution No. 1.

Here are 10 simple ways to keep that resolution:

**1. INSPECT YOUR OUTLETS.** Loose-fitting plugs can surprise someone



Look familiar? If so, it's time to call an electrician to have additional outlets installed.

with a shock or start a fire. If your wall plate is broken, replace it so wires won't be exposed. And insert plastic safety caps into unused outlets if your family includes young children.

**2. MAKE PEACE WITH PLUGS.** If a plug doesn't comfortably fit into an outlet, don't force it. Try a different outlet. And never remove the grounding pin (third prong) so a three-prong plug will fit into a two-prong outlet.

**3. BE CAREFUL WITH CORDS.** They're not designed to last forever. Toss frayed or cracked cords. And never run them under carpets or rugs, where

they would have to endure constant pounding that could rip them or wear them out—exposing you to fire from overheated wires.

**4. PACK UP EXTENSION CORDS.**

They're fine for connecting strands of holiday lights together and helping decorations reach plugs during December. But come January 1, pack them up and store them. Extension cords are designed for temporary use.

**5. WATCH YOUR WATTAGE.** The light-bulbs in your lamps and overhead fixtures should match the specifications on those fixtures. A bulb with wattage that is too high can overheat.

**6. FIND NO FAULT.** Ground-fault circuit interrupters, or GFCIs, are a must in every outlet in the kitchen, bathrooms, laundry, garage and outdoors. If water could touch electricity, you need GFCIs on every outlet in the room.

**7. FUSS WITH YOUR FUSES.** If you don't know whether your fuses are the right size for the circuit they're protecting, call an electrician, who can clue you in.

**8. ADJUST APPLIANCES.** If a circuit trips every time you plug in your hair dryer, or if your coffeemaker has ever shocked you when you plugged it in, you either have faulty appliances or an overloaded circuit. An electrician can identify and solve your problem.

**9. WATCH THE WIRING.** Faulty electrical wires start many house fires. If you hear popping or sizzling sounds behind the walls or if light switches feel hot, do not use those fixtures or switches until a licensed electrician has replaced them.

**10. GET WHAT YOU NEED.** Unless you live in a brand-new house, you probably are using more electricity than the builder ever dreamed you would. Call an electrician to determine whether your home needs more electrical capacity.

*Source: Energy Education Council*



## **KARNES** ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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**LEROY T. SKLOSS**  
General Manager

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**(830) 569-5538**  
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Toll-Free (Karnes City)

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HOME ELECTRICAL SAFETY

# Monthly Calendar

Have a plan for maintaining your home's electrical system instead of dealing with issues as they arise—when they might pose a threat. Mark off a few items each month to help bolster your home's electrical safety. Use this calendar to keep you on track.

**January**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Check and replace furnace filters

**February**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Vacuum refrigerator coils

**March**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Replace smoke or carbon monoxide alarms not replaced in past year

**April**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Check and replace furnace filters

**May**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Vacuum refrigerator coils
- Clean air conditioners or schedule annual inspection

**June**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Dust light fixtures and lamps
- Schedule annual inspection of gas-powered dryer

**July**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Check and repair air-conditioner filters

**August**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Vacuum refrigerator coils

**September**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Schedule annual furnace cleaning and inspection

**October**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Check and replace furnace filters

**November**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Vacuum refrigerator coils

**December**

- Test ground- and arc-fault circuit interrupters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Check electrical cords for damage
- Dust light fixtures and lamps



Letting the sun shine in can help you save energy and lower heating costs.

## Quick Tips To Lower Heating Bills

You don't have to shiver through the winter or wear your winter coat to bed just to save a few bucks on heating this winter. Here are five ways to lower your energy bill and stay comfortable, too:

**TURN THE THERMOSTAT DOWN BY JUST ONE DEGREE.** The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that you can save 3 percent on your heating bill for every degree you set your thermostat back during the winter—as long as you leave it there.

**TURN OFF EXHAUST FANS IN THE KITCHEN AND BATHROOM** as soon as the smell or steam is gone. It doesn't take long for those fans to blow all of the warm air out of your house.

**CLOSE THE FIREPLACE DAMPER** when you're not burning a fire. An open damper is a hole in your house that sucks heated air out and invites cold winter air in.

**MOVE FURNITURE AND RUGS AWAY FROM HEATING VENTS** so air can circulate freely. That will make your heating system's work a lot easier.

**OPEN CURTAINS OR BLINDS ON SOUTH-FACING WINDOWS** on sunny days so the sun's warmth can radiate into the house. Close them at night to help trap that heat indoors.

SOURCE: ELECTRICAL SAFETY FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

# Weigh Options Before Installing Heating and Cooling System

**DEAR JIM:** My old heating and cooling system must be replaced. With high energy costs and future energy price volatility, how can I determine the best type to go with? —*Jack W.*

**DEAR JACK:** It can make economic, environmental and lifestyle sense to switch to an entirely different type of heating source for your home. The costs of fuels, such as natural gas, propane and electricity, have shifted dramatically over the past decade. Many new heating systems last 20 years or more, so with wide variations in fuel costs, long-term estimated operating costs and paybacks are not always reliable.

Historically, electricity prices have been the most stable among fuel options and will likely continue to be. For homes heated with electricity, air-source or geothermal heat pumps make good sense because they can heat, and cool, your house efficiently.

A standard air-source heat pump is basically a central air conditioner with a few extra parts. The outdoor unit looks exactly the same as one for a central air conditioner. It is called a heat pump because it literally pumps heat out of your house (cooling mode) or into your house (heating mode) to or from the outdoor air around the outdoor compressor/condenser unit.

Among central heating and cooling systems, geothermal heat pumps provide the highest efficiency and lowest year-round utility bills. While geothermal heat pumps have higher initial installation costs (due to the need to place loops, or tubing, to run through the ground or to a well or pond), the federal stimulus bill provides consumers (through the end of 2016) a 30 percent tax credit on the cost of putting in a geothermal heat pump system, which makes them much more affordable.

The primary advantage of installing a heat pump of any kind is that they can be used year-round for both heating and cooling. This pro-

vides year-round savings and shortens the payback period. In contrast, a super-efficient furnace generally gets used only during winter and a central air conditioner only during summer.

For homes with only one or two occupants, a portable heat pump may be a good choice. I use a portable heat pump in my own home/office. In addition to cooling the room during summer, it also functions as an efficient portable heater during winter. It produces 14,000 Btu per hour of cooling and 11,000 Btu per hour of heating. This is much more heat output than a standard electric space heater using the same amount of electricity during winter.

The efficiency of a portable air conditioner is similar to that of a window air conditioner. Although this is less efficient than most central air conditioners, using one can still save you money. By keeping just one or two rooms comfortably warm (or cool), you can set your central thermostat lower and save electricity that otherwise would power your central unit. Use it in the dining room at dinner-

time, roll it into the living room for TV watching, and then relocate it to the bedroom for sleeping.

They are typically mounted on casters so they can be easily rolled from room to room. Most operate on standard 120-volt electricity, so they can be plugged into any wall outlet near a window.

A portable air conditioner/heat pump operates similarly to a typical window unit. The internal rotary compressor, evaporator and condenser function in the same way. The primary difference is it is on casters and rests on the floor.

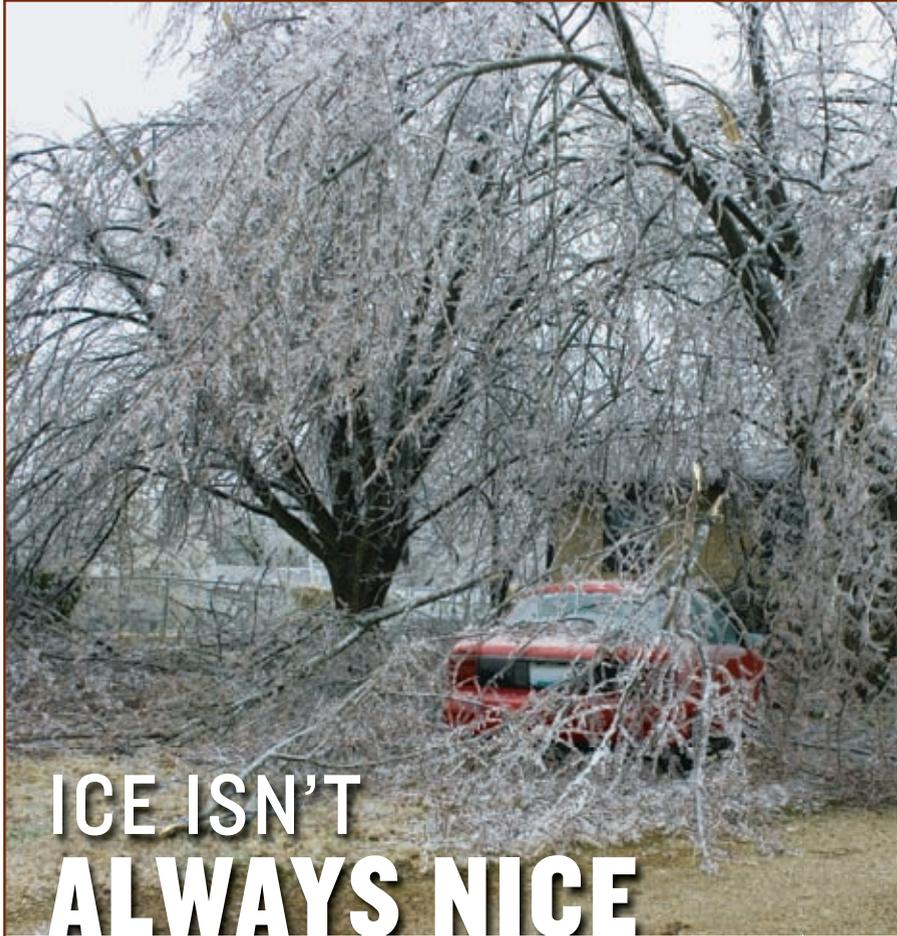
When choosing a heating and cooling system, there are additional factors to consider.

- Make sure the system is sized correctly for your home.
- Research what kind of maintenance the system will require.
- Have your ductwork inspected to be sure it is in good shape and compatible with the new system.
- Get estimates from several reputable contractors.

© James Dullely



**A super-efficient geothermal heat pump is shown with and without the front cover. Notice the large air cleaner and water fittings that can also heat water.**



# ICE ISN'T ALWAYS NICE

Although much of the state is unaccustomed to snow and ice, temperatures can fall below freezing—even in South Texas. Snow and ice can snap tree branches and cause electric lines to sag.

## To make your family safe and comfortable during a winter power outage:

- Report any outages.
- Turn off electrical appliances that were operating at the time the power went off, including your heating system. Leave one light on so you'll know when service has been restored.
- Keep warm by closing off rooms you don't need and use only safe sources of heat, like a woodstove. Do not burn charcoal indoors—it releases carbon monoxide, which is deadly. If you operate lanterns or fuel-fired cookstoves or heaters, make sure that you have adequate ventilation to keep harmful fumes from accumulating.
- Don't drive unless absolutely necessary until road conditions improve. If you must drive, go slowly and pump your brakes to stop. Whether walking or driving, be extra careful not to slip on treacherous ice.

**Ice storms are more than a nuisance—they can be deadly!**

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE BROUGHT TO YOU BY KARNES ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE.

## FAST (AND FREE) WINTER WARMUPS

We all know that cutting back unnecessary energy use is an easy way to keep your hard-earned money in your pocket, but that doesn't mean it has to leave you shivering. Here are a few things you can do at home today to stay warm this winter, at almost no cost to you.

**1. LET THE SUNSHINE IN:** Open up your drapes and let the sun heat your home for free (and close them at dusk so they help insulate).

**2. REARRANGE YOUR ROOMS:** Move your furniture around so you are sitting near interior walls—exterior walls and older windows are likely to be drafty.

**3. KEEP IT SHUT:** Traditional fireplaces are an energy loser—it's best not to use them because they pull heated air out of the house and up the chimney. If you're not using it, make sure the damper is closed.

**4. TURN IT DOWN:** Fight the urge to crank up the heat in your house. Put on a sweater, and turn your thermostat down a few degrees instead.

**5. COOK MORE:** Ditch the expense of take-out food and fire up your stove or oven. Not only will you get a home-cooked meal, but also the residual heat from a working kitchen can help keep you toasty.

**6. SHUT THE DOOR:** If your office or spare room is just serving as storage, let the boxes, file cabinets and other furniture get frostbite. Shut the vents, shut the door, and keep the heat where you need it most.

**7. FIND A BUDDY:** Grab your husband, wife or furry, four-legged friend. Anything warm-blooded to cuddle with is an almost instant way to stop the shivers. And, it might be the most fun way, too!



## **I CHANGED MY AIR FILTER. AND MY WARDROBE.**

Saving money on my electric bill seemed like a good  
enough reason to update my closet. Find out what  
you can do at [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com).

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**Welcome**

Karnes Electric Cooperative, Inc. is a locally owned and operated not-for-profit electric distribution utility. We serve 12 South Texas and Coastal Bend counties generally located between San Antonio and Corpus Christi, Texas. The rapidly growing area includes Atascosa, Bee, Goliad, Karnes and Wilson counties.



Karnes Electric is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative. Touchstone Energy is not a power company. It's a national alliance of local, consumer-owned electric cooperatives that are dedicated to providing members with reliable, high-quality service at competitive prices. Touchstone Energy is the brand name by which cooperatives identify and connect themselves with the alliance.

Karnes Electric Cooperative, Inc. offers competitive rates, state-of-the-art equipment and innovative solutions for your electric power needs.

Call us whenever you need The Home

Team Advantage.

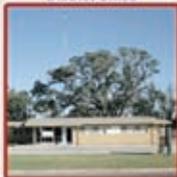
**Two Locations**

Main Office



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(830) 780-3082 • (830) 780-2347 (fax)  
KARNES@KARNESCOOP.ORG

District Office



1824 West Goodwin • Pleasanton, Texas 78054  
(830) 968-0208 • (830) 968-4111 (fax)  
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