Resolve To Save Energy in 2013

MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER LEROY T. SKLOSS

The start of the new year always seems to bring about the inevitable list of resolutions to improve one's life: Lose weight, stop smoking, exercise more ... conserve electricity.

Well, that last one might not have actually appeared on your resolutions list, but it can be just as important as any personal health goals, both to your financial bottom line and the overall health of our cooperative and the state's electricity system.

Right now, there are adequate supplies of electricity to serve Texas' needs, according to the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, the grid operator for 85 percent of the state. But a few years down the road, ERCOT predicts, there may be a shortfall of power given the state's growing demand.

But if we all do our part and make energy conservation a part of our daily habits, we may be able to change that forecast.

As one saying goes, it takes 21 days to create a new habit. During that time, it may take a conscious effort to change your behavior—for instance, remembering to switch off lights as you leave a room. But, you may find, after a few repetitions of a new behavior, you won't even have to think about it. You'll turn off the lights automatically.

Here are some other energy-saving resolutions that you might consider for 2013:

After you've jotted down the traditional New Year's resolutions, why not add 'Save energy?' Then you can add 'Save money' because saving energy will help lower your utility bills.

▶ Unplug computers, TV sets and phone chargers, plus the coffee maker and other kitchen countertop appliances, when you're through using them. These items draw electricity as long as they are plugged in, even if they are turned off. Collectively, their energy use adds up.

▶ If any of the overhead fixtures, table lamps or outdoor lights around your house still have those old, inefficient incandescent lightbulbs, change them to CFLs, which use less electricity and can reduce your power bill.

▶ Explore LED, or light-emitting diode, lighting fixtures. The light is built into the fixture—for all kinds of decorative and task lighting. They sip even less energy than CFLs, and with no bulbs to burn out, the light could work as long as the fixture does. Those bulbs still aren't as cheap as other options, but prices are dropping. In the long run, they will pay for themselves.

▶ Install a programmable thermostat. Use it to lower the heat by a few degrees once the family leaves the house every day and to raise it back up just before everybody gets home. You won't feel any less comfortable at home, but you'll notice a dip in your energy bill.

If everyone in Karnes Electric Cooperative's membership embraced just one or two of these ideas, or took other energy-efficiency measures, the effect would be magnified by our 10,889 members. And if everyone in Texas embraced even the simplest of these ideas, turning off unused lights, it could add up to a significant saving, and perhaps help keep the lights on for all of us.

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How Many Cooperatives Do You Belong To?

The utility that sends electricity to your home is a cooperative, which means that it is owned by its consumers.

You may have noticed that your electric cooperative sometimes refers to its customers as "members." That's because you—and all of your neighbors and everyone who buys electricity from the electric cooperative—are members.

Small-town electric utilities aren't the only businesses that operate as cooperatives. Food cooperatives, day-care cooperatives and farm cooperatives are fairly common all over the country. Worker cooperatives are businesses that are owned by their employees. Credit unions are cooperatives whose depositors are member-owners.

Even Best Western motels, ACE hardware stores and Carpet One Floors & Home stores operate under a cooperative model as retail or purchasing co-ops whose franchisees are member-owners.

What they have in common: Their members have a say. Most have boards of directors that are elected from among the members, and hold annual meetings so all members can vote for those directors.

You're an owner of your electric cooperative, and if you belong to other cooperatives, you're an owner there, too. Get involved in your cooperatives by voting or even running for a board of directors, by attending the cooperatives' annual meetings and by keeping up with the business end of the organizations.

At a cooperative, each member's voice counts.

Garage Door Safety

BY KELLY TRAPNELL

Try this riddle: What weighs 600 pounds, deters intruders, and goes up or down at the push of a button? It's your automatic garage door, the largest moving piece of equipment in many homes.

Automatic garage doors may be a routine part of leaving and arriving home, but you should be aware of the potential for injury. Underwriters Laboratories recommends these tips to make safety an open-and-shut case when it comes to your home's garage:

1. ALWAYS KEEP AUTOMATIC GARAGE DOORS FULLY OPEN OR FULLY CLOSED. Some folks may leave a small opening at the bottom for pets to get in and out for food or shade. But a small opening could also be an invitation for a child to try to crawl through and get stuck. Another push of the button could send the heavy door down—causing injury—instead of bringing the door up when trying to free anyone stuck underneath. If you encounter someone stuck in an automatic door, call your local fire department.

2. READ INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN YOUR GARAGE DOOR PROPERLY. Check your automatic door monthly to be sure safety precautions are working. Many garage doors boast a safety feature that triggers an automatic reversal if anything is encountered while closing. To check, place a 1½-inch object (like a flat 2-by-4) in the path of the door to make sure the door correctly reverses when contact is made. Instructions should also advise on maintaining a properly balanced door. Call a qualified repair company for service or maintenance.

THE CHAMBERLAIN GROUP, INC

Garage doors with an automatic reversal feature can help protect children and pets.

3. DO NOT ALLOW CHILDREN TO OPERATE A GARAGE DOOR. It may seem like a harmless, simple task to allow children to push the garage opener. But activating heavy equipment should be taken seriously.

4. AVOID WALKING UNDER A DOOR THAT IS OPENING OR CLOSING. You never know when a malfunction may take place. Steer clear of a moving door.

5. KNOW WHEN AND HOW TO USE THE EMERGENCY RELEASE. You'll find a cord with a handle hanging along the track of your garage door. Always use caution when using this release, and only use it when the door is fully closed.

An automatic garage door opener is a common convenience powered by electricity. Just as electricity demands safety and respect, so does the equipment it operates.

Kelly Trapnell *writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

Karnes Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 7, Karnes City, TX 78118

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Leroy T. Skloss

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Pay your bill, submit meter readings and view your account summary at karnesec.org.

Contact Us

For information and outages during office hours

(830) 780-3952 Karnes City
(830) 569-5538 Pleasanton
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Work Together This Winter

Decrease demand to help avoid blackouts

Do you remember February 2011, when much of Texas experienced rolling blackouts?

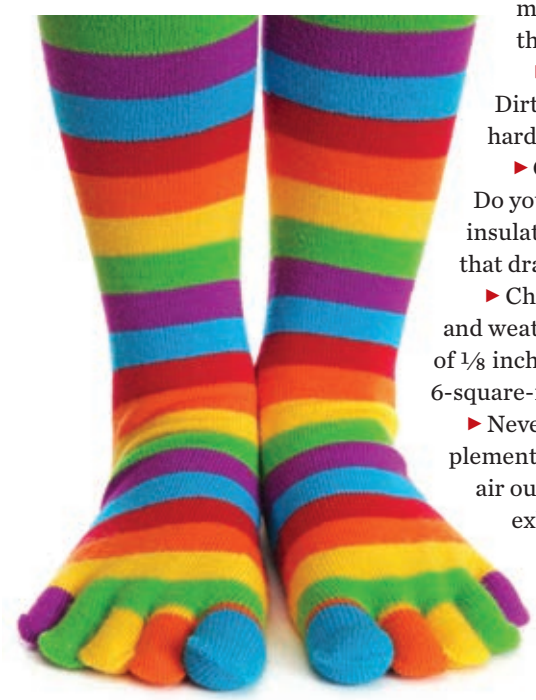
The state was suffering through a great freeze, and this caused great demand for electricity, as most areas were below freezing for several days. The demand—combined with more than 50 generating units tripping offline due to sagging, ice-laden lines and inadequate weatherization—caused the Electric Reliability Council of Texas to institute rolling blackouts, or load shedding, because the state simply didn't have enough juice. ERCOT said that about 7,000 megawatts had gone offline—enough capacity to power about 1.4 million homes.

While ERCOT's measures prevented a total blackout in record-freezing temperatures, Texans sure don't want to experience rolling outages again. So what can we do about it?

By working together this winter, we can help decrease demand while still maintaining comfort. Here are some easy steps we can take at home to conserve energy:

- Install a programmable thermostat and set it to lower the temperature at night and whenever the house is unoccupied. Lowering your thermostat by 10 degrees at night can reduce your heating bill by 10 to 20 percent.
- Make sure your thermostat is programmed correctly and not located in an unheated space, a poorly sealed or seldom-used room, in direct sunlight, or near a heat source. The thermostat must be able to sense the average temperature in your home. If it is not in the right place, contact a heating and air-conditioning professional about having it moved.
- Lower your thermostat and wear socks and a sweater indoors. Lowering by just 1 degree can reduce energy use by 3 percent.

Save energy with socks! Keeping your feet warm and toasty helps you feel warmer overall, allowing for a lower thermostat setting.



- Get a humidifier to add moisture to the air. Air tends to be dryer in the winter, and since moister air feels warmer, a humidifier can make you feel more comfortable even though your thermostat is set lower.
- Inspect your air filters monthly. Dirty air filters cause your heater to work harder, using more energy.
- Check your outlets and switch plates. Do you feel a cold draft? If yes, install foam insulation gaskets behind them, and stop that draft where it starts.
- Check all exterior doors for air leaks and weatherstrip and caulk as needed. A gap of ⅛ inch around a door is equivalent to a 6-square-inch hole in the side of your house.
- Never use a traditional fireplace for supplemental heating. A fireplace sucks heated air out of your home to fuel the fire and exhausts it through the chimney, and then your furnace has to turn on to replace that warm air.
- Make sure your water heater is set no higher than 125 degrees and install a water heater blanket.

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Comparing Insulation VALUE

Adding insulation? Check the material's R-value—the ability of insulation to resist the transfer of heat. R-value depends on material, thickness and density. A higher R-value indicates more effective insulation, saving energy dollars.

Compare R-values and common uses for several types of insulation:

Type of Insulation	R-value per inch (range)	Common Uses	Installation Method
Batts, Rolls			
Fiberglass	3.17 (3.0-4.0)	Wall, floor and ceiling cavities	Fitted between studs, joists or rafters
Rock Wool	3.17 (3.0-3.7)	Wall, floor and ceiling cavities	Fitted between studs, joists or rafters
Cotton	3.2	Wall, floor and ceiling cavities	Fitted between studs, joists or rafters
Loose, Poured or Blown			
Fiberglass	2.2 (2.2-4.0)	Ceiling cavities	Poured and fluffed, or blown by machine
Rock Wool	3.1 (2.8-3.7)	Ceiling cavities	Poured and fluffed, or blown by machine
Dry Cellulose	3.2 (2.8-3.7)	Ceiling cavities	Blown by machine
Wet-Spray Cellulose	3.5 (3.0-3.7)	Wall cavities	Sprayed into cavities
Perlite	2.7 (2.5-4.0)	Hollow concrete block	Poured
Polyurethane	6.2 (5.8-6.8)	Wall and ceiling cavities, roofs	Foamed into cavities
Open-Cell Isocyanurate (Icynene)	3.6	Wall and ceiling cavities	Foamed into open or closed cavities
Magnesium Silicate (Air Krete)	3.9	Wall cavities	Foamed into open cavities

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, E Source

Insulation Installation Safety Tips

When tackling home insulation installation on your own, safety should be foremost in your mind. Follow these tips from the North American Insulation Manufacturers Association on safe insulation installation practices.

WEAR APPROPRIATE CLOTHING. To reduce the chances of skin irritation, wear a head cover, gloves and loose-fitting, long-sleeved, long-legged clothing.

WEAR PROPER PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT. Safety glasses and respiratory protection may be necessary, depending on your work environment. The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Association offers guidelines in its Respiratory Protection Standard that may be helpful.

TAKE CARE IF FIBERS GET ON YOUR SKIN OR EYES. If insulation fibers collect on your skin, don't rub and scratch or remove with compressed air. Instead, lay tape, adhesive side down, and then remove it gently, so the fibers are pulled from the skin. If fibers get in your eyes, never rub—flush with water or eyewash solution. Contact your doctor if you have continued irritation.

KEEP DUST TO A MINIMUM. Leave the materials in packaging for as long as possible. Use tools that create the least amount of dust; power tools should have dust-collection devices. Put scrap materials in the trash and don't let equipment wander too far from the work site.

MAINTAIN ADEQUATE VENTILATION. Determine whether your work site needs a dust-collection system. Also, exhausted air containing fibers should be filtered before being recirculated into inside workspaces. Finally, ventilation systems used to capture fibers should be regularly checked.

Source: Home Safety Council

TV (Efficiency) Guides

High-powered TVs drain energy, so opt for efficient models

BY MEGAN MCKOY-NOE

SHARP

Which appliance uses more energy: a refrigerator or a television? Some large TVs—when used an average of five hours per day—can cost more to operate than a new, basic refrigerator.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, 44 percent of American homes have three or more television sets, and each new set adds to a home's monthly energy bill.

In the market for a new television? You're not alone—U.S. consumers purchased an estimated 40 million new televisions with an average screen size of 50 inches last year.

To keep your electric bills in check, here are some tips to consider before buying a new television.

Display tactics

Three parts of a TV affect energy use: display technology, screen size and resolution. Plasma screens often are cited as the largest energy user—mainly because their large 42- to 65-inch screens typically draw between 240 and 400 watts.

LCD TVs don't need much power to operate—111 watts on average. Most LCD screens range from 21 to 49 inches. These TVs fall into two categories: those with cold-cathode fluorescent lamps to illuminate the screen and backlit models employing a light-emitting diode. LED units offer better picture quality and thinner and lighter screens.

Remember that the larger the screen, the more energy you'll drain. And although a high-definition TV transforms the latest blockbuster movie into a theater-like experience, these sets generally use more power.

Energy Star boosts ratings

Energy Star TVs cut an estimated $3.5 billion from consumer electric bills annually. The joint energy-efficiency ratings program of the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency created the first set of voluntary television efficiency standards in 1998. Today's Energy Star-qualified screens use, on average, 40 percent less energy than standard models.

Standards are constantly ratcheting up. In 2008, a 50-inch Energy Star-rated television used 318 watts on average. In 2010, those sets had to curb energy use to 153 watts or less, and by 2012, no more than 108 watts. Energy Star provides an online guide that ranks TVs by energy use, size, brand and display type at energystar.gov.

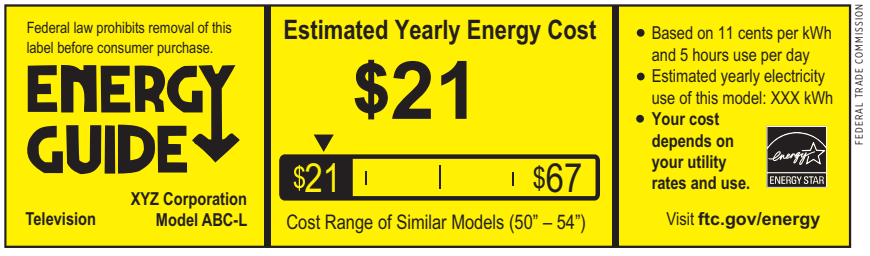
Energy Star Partners like TopTen USA also maintain lists of the top energy-efficient televisions (and other household appliances) based on size at toptenusa.org.

Tune in to savings

If you're not in the market for a new TV but want to make sure your model is operating efficiently, these tips may help:

- Turn off the TV and other connected devices when they're not being used. Consider using smart power strips to eliminate continual power draw.
- Reduce TV brightness by turning down the LCD backlight. You'll save energy and still retain good picture quality.
- Turn on the power-saver mode, which many new TVs offer.
- Control room lighting. While many energy-saving tips reduce brightness of the screen, you can compensate by dimming lights around your TV.

Megan McKoy-Noe, CCC, *writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.* **Brian Sloboda** *contributed to this article.*



ABOVE: In 2012, Sharp's Aquos LCD TV claimed the top three spots on TopTen USA's most energy-efficient large screen television list.

LEFT: Similar to other appliances, such as refrigerators and washing machines, manufacturers are required to post a bright yellow Energy Guide label on all televisions sold since 2011. The label compares the annual operating cost of a specific television to the plug-in cost of similar models.

Happy New Year

from Karnes Electric Cooperative!

May hope, love and warmth be in your heart's possessing, and may the New Year bring you and yours many blessings.

Karnes Electric Cooperative will be closed Tuesday, January 1, in observance of the holiday.

As always, crews will be on standby in the event of an emergency.

ISTOCKPHOTO

Be Prepared

In the event of extreme weather conditions, your electricity supply cannot be guaranteed at all times. This means you need to be prepared so that you can take care of yourself and your family in the event of a power outage for a short or extended period of time.

How you can prepare

- Ensure that flashlights are accessible with fully charged batteries on hand.
- Have access to a phone that doesn't need electricity, such as a landline or a fully charged cellphone.
- Keep a battery-powered radio on hand for updates on weather conditions and power outages.
- Keep a stock of nonperishable foods in your pantry, including an adequate supply of bottled water.

In the event of an outage

- If you're in a life-threatening situation, call 911 immediately.
- Check your neighbor's house to see if they have also lost power. If their power is on, check your breakers to see if one or more have flipped.
- If you have sick or elderly neighbors, check to see if they need help.
- Ensure that all lights and appliances are switched off except for one light. That way, when power is restored, you reduce the risk of a circuit overloading.
- Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Refrigerated food should be safe for about four hours in a sealed refrigerator. A full freezer will keep food frozen for 48 hours.