



Pitt and Greene

Electric Membership Corporation

“Where Customers Have A Choice”

Member Newsletter

March, 2012

How to Buy An Energy-Efficient Appliance

You go shopping for a new refrigerator, and you’re on a budget. The best buy is the fridge with the lowest sales price, right?

Not necessarily. If you buy the lowest-priced refrigerator, you may end up spending more than if you buy a more expensive one. The reason? The cost of owning a home appliance has three components: the initial purchase price, the cost of repairs and maintenance, and the cost to operate it.

To figure out how much you’ll spend over the lifetime of the appliance, you have to look at all these factors. The appliance with the lowest initial purchase price, or even the one with the best repair record, isn’t necessarily the one that costs the least to operate. Here’s an example of how an appliance’s energy consumption can affect your out-of-pocket costs.

Suppose you’re in the market for a new refrigerator-freezer. Different models of refrigerators with the same capacity can vary dramatically in the amount of electricity they use. For one popular size and configuration, for example, the annual electricity consumption varies across models from a low of about 600 kilowatt-hours a year to a high of more than 800 kilowatt-hours a year. Based on national average electricity prices, that means the annual cost to operate this refrigerator can range from about \$50 to \$70, depending on which model you buy.

A \$20 difference in annual operating costs might not sound like much. But remember that you will enjoy these savings year after year for the life of the appliance, while you must pay any difference in purchase price only once. As a result, you may actually save money by buying the more expensive, more energy-efficient model.

You can learn about the energy efficiency of an appliance that you’re thinking about buying through the yellow and black EnergyGuide label. The Federal Trade Commission’s Appliance Labeling Rule requires appliance manufacturers to put these labels on:

- * Refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers, clothes washers
- * Water Heaters, furnaces, boilers
- * Central air conditioners, room air conditioners, heat pumps
- * Pool heaters

When you shop for one of these appliances in a dealer’s showroom, you should find the labels hanging on the inside of an appliance or secured to the outside. The law requires that the labels specify:

- * The capacity of the particular model
- * For refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers, clothes washers and water heaters, the estimated annual energy consumption of the model
- * For air conditioners, heat pumps, furnaces, boilers and pool heaters, the energy efficiency rating
- * The range of estimated annual energy consumption, or energy efficiency ratings, of comparable appliances

Also, some appliances may feature the ENERGY STAR logo, which means that the appliance is significantly more energy efficient than the average comparable model. To compare how updating appliances and making other changes around your home can impact your electric bill, visit www.TogetherWeSave.com.



Manager's Message

By: Mark A. Suggs

State Regulation Often Precede Federal Rules

Several environmental issues stirring national debate that have an impact on electric cooperatives, renewable portfolio standards (RPS) for electric utilities, hydraulic fracturing of shale gas reserves, haze regulations, and more, once had taken on state-level or regional importance before they reached Congress.

For example, legislative and regulatory oversight of hydraulic fracturing (also called fracking) for natural gas found in shale deposits has been primarily a state concern, whether to approve drilling permits and how to alleviate local road and infrastructure damage. Then claims surfaced connecting fracking to groundwater contamination and increased methane emissions. While bills have been introduced in the 112th Congress to promote shale gas extraction, there's now also a push for federal oversight of these operations.

Before (so far unsuccessful) congressional proposals to impose a federal RPS reached a floor debate in Congress a few years ago, 29 states and the District of Columbia had already adopted their own RPS laws that require utilities to add increasing amounts of "clean and green" electricity to their retail power supply mix (ranging from 10 percent to 40 percent) by a certain date (mostly between 2015 and 2030); eight other states have adopted renewable energy goals. Since the economic downturn, congressional debate shifted from an RPS to a broader clean energy standard (CES) that includes renewables such as wind, solar, and hydro along with high efficiency natural gas turbines when replacing coal-burning power plants, coal-fired stations equipped with carbon capture and storage capabilities, and nuclear power. CES proponents plan to renew their push to get Congress to pass legislation this year.

Of course, state legislation sometimes mimics federal trends. In the wake of congressional debate on the role of clean coal technology, several states enacted bills that provide incentives for clean coal generation. Some states have also required utilities to prepare for the addition of carbon capture and sequestration equipment to coal plants.

In other situations, states may develop more affordable solutions than federal alternatives. A 2011 regulatory battle in North Dakota pitted a state regional haze plan against an U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program that would have cost consumers an extra \$800 million with little to show for the investment.

Although North Dakota air quality is consistently within EPA's health based standards, the agency sought to intervene, despite the fact that the state regional haze program provides a reasonable implementation schedule that has resulted in significant improvements. When Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which generates and delivers power to 135 electric distribution cooperatives in nine states, put its grassroots network into action, EPA backed off efforts aimed at forcing the Roughrider State to impose requirements that would lead to the installation of expensive, but unnecessary, equipment.

No matter where environmental legislation gets its start, it can lead to higher electric bills. Learn about regulatory issues affecting you and find out how your voice can make a difference with lawmakers at www.ourenergy.coop.

Operating and Maintaining Your Heat Pump

Like all heating and cooling systems, proper maintenance remains the key to efficient heat pump operation. The difference in electric use between a well-maintained heat pump and a severely neglected one ranges from 10 percent to 25 percent.

Remember not to set back a heat pump's thermostat if it causes any backup heating system to kick on; they are usually more expensive to operate. Continuous indoor fan operation can also hurt heat pump performance unless you use a high-efficiency, variable-speed fan motor. Operate your heat pump with the "auto" fan setting on your thermostat.

Clean or change filters once a month or as needed, and maintain the system according to manufacturer's instructions. Dirty filters, coils, and fans reduce airflow, which will decrease system performance and possibly damage the compressor. Clean outdoor coils whenever they appear dirty; occasionally, turn off power to the fan and clean it; remove vegetation and clutter from around the outdoor unit. Clean the supply and return registers within your home, and straighten their fins if bent.

You should also have a professional technician service your heat pump at least every year. To learn more about heat pumps, visit www.energysavers.gov.

Is Your Home Wiring Over The Hill?

When it's time to upgrade your home, a fresh coat of paint and updated fixtures may come to mind. But what about hiring a professional to update the wiring behind a switch plate or outlet? Do you know the hidden dangers of aged wiring in your home? Don't take on wiring problems yourself. Electrical upgrades often require a professional who knows what inspections and permits are needed. Here are a few clues to find out if your home's electric network needs a professional switch.

Type of wiring. Modern wiring is insulated, meaning it is covered in plastic. Older homes may have copper or aluminum wiring. Copper wiring can work just as well as modern wiring if it is still in good condition and has not been altered or improperly installed. However, fire risk increases in homes with both copper and aluminum wiring. Corrosion to aluminum from copper can lead to loose connections causing fires. Use only aluminum-approved switches, outlets, and other accessories if your home has aluminum wiring.

Plugs fall out of outlets easily. Loose plugs are a high fire danger. Older outlets that have lost their grip need to be replaced. Luckily this upgrade is affordable.

Not enough outlets. The increasing use of chargers for phones and many other electronic devices means outlets are in high demand, especially in older homes where outlets are not as plentiful. A lack of outlets can result in overuse of extension cords and power strips. Be sure to use quality, 14-gauge or thicker cords that are approved by Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Never overload an outlet. Overloading can cause heat, leading to fire risk. Consider having a licensed electrician to add outlets to your home.

Danger in wet areas. GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlets are now required in areas around water like a kitchen, bathroom or outdoors. But in older homes, GFCIs may not have been installed. It is fairly simple to replace old receptacles with GFCIs; hire a professional to upgrade outlets near water.

Wind causes lights to blink. If you notice your lights blinking on windy days, it may be due to worn wiring in the weatherhead (where overhead lines enter your home).



*Pitt & Greene EMC will be closed Friday,
April 6th, 2012 in observance of Easter.*

Be Prepared for Spring Storms

Lighting from thunderstorms kills more people each year than tornadoes or hurricanes, according to the American Red Cross. As spring arrives, make sure you're prepared to handle storms that come with the changing season. Follow these tips from the Red Cross to stay safe.

Stay away from down power lines. Electricity could still be flowing through them. Report them to Pitt & Greene at 252-753-3128 immediately.

Hear thunder? Head inside. If you can hear it, you could be in danger from lightning. Stay indoors at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder, a recommendation from the National Weather Service. If you're outside and can't seek shelter indoors, avoid high ground, water, tall isolated trees, and metal objects like bleachers or fences.

Unplug your electronics. Avoid using electrical items and telephones, which can carry power surges. Keep a battery-powered TV or radio on hand for weather updates.

Delay outdoor activities. If conditions are right for a thunderstorm, postpone all outdoor activities and stay inside. It doesn't have to be raining for lightning to strike.

Assemble an emergency preparedness kit with the following items:

- * Allow one gallon of water per person, per day
- * Non-perishable food
- * Flashlight
- * Battery-powered or hand crank radio (preferably NOAA weather radio)
- * Extra Batteries
- * First aid kit
- * Seven day medicine supply
- * Copies of personal documents
- * Cell phone with chargers
- * Emergency contact information and Cash

De lunes a viernes de 8:00 a.m. a 5:00 p.m.

252-753-3128 ó 1-800-622-1362

Snow Hill

De lunes a viernes

De 8:00 a.m. a 12:30 p.m. y de 1:30 p.m. a 5:00 p.m.

252-747-7600

**CORTES DE SUMINISTRO ELÉCTRICO Y
EMERGENCIAS:**

Durante fines de semana, días festivos y después del
horario de oficina

252-753-8778

Co-op Office Hours

Farmville

Monday - Friday - 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

252-753-3128 or 1-800-622-1362

Snow Hill

Monday - Friday

8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

252-747-7600

POWER OUTAGES & EMERGENCIAS

During weekends, holidays and after office hours

252-753-8778