



# Pitt and Greene

## Electric Membership Corporation

*“Where Customers Have A Choice”*

March 2017

*Member Newsletter*

### **Easy steps to greater efficiency**

Do you want to save money and electricity but have limited time, money and patience? According to the Department of Energy, a “typical American family” spends nearly \$2,000 per year on their home energy bills. Much of that money, however, is wasted through leaky windows or ducts, old appliances or inefficient heating and cooling systems.

Luckily, there are several relatively easy ways to save energy without a substantial commitment of time and money. These efforts will help you save whether you own or rent an older or newly constructed home. And, you won't have to hire a specialist or call in a favor from someone who is handy with tools to help you.

#### *Where to start*

According to Money Magazine, “improving the envelope” of your home is a good place to start. Sunlight, seasonal temperature changes and wind vibrations can loosen up even a tight home, increasing air leakage. Doors and windows may not close tightly, and duct work can spring leaks, wasting cooled and heated air. By placing weather stripping and caulk around windows and doors, you can keep cool air inside during warm months and prevent chilly air from penetrating the indoors during colder months. Sealing gaps around piping, dryer vents, fans and outlets also helps to seal the envelope and creates greater efficiency. Apply weather stripping around overlooked spaces like your attic hatch or pull-down stairs.

Replacing incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs can make a big difference in home efficiency and is one of the fastest ways to cut your energy bill. Known for their longevity and efficiency, LED bulbs have an estimated operational life span of typically 10,000 to 20,000 hours compared to 1,000 hours of a typical incandescent. According to the Dept. of Energy, by replacing your home's five most frequently used light fixtures or bulbs with models that have earned the ENERGY STAR rating, you can save \$75 each year.

#### *Wrapping up savings*

Installing a blanket around your water heater could reduce standby heat losses by 25 to 45 percent and save you about 7 to 16 percent in water heating costs, according to the Dept. of Energy. For a small investment of about \$30, you can purchase pre-cut jackets or blankets and install them in about one hour. On a safety note, the Dept. of Energy recommends that you not set the thermostat above 130 degrees Fahrenheit on an electric water heater with an insulating jacket or blanket; the higher temperature setting could cause the wiring to overheat.

Given that a large portion of your monthly energy bill goes toward heating and cooling your home, it makes sense to ensure your home's heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system is performing at an optimal level. Checking, changing or cleaning your filter extends the life of your HVAC system and saves you money.

Air filters prevent dust and allergens from clogging your HVAC system. Otherwise, dust and dirt trapped in a system's air filter leads to several problems, including: reduced air flow in the home and up to 15 percent higher operating costs; lowered system efficiency; and costly duct cleaning or replacement. Many HVAC professionals recommend cleaning the system filters monthly. A simple

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## ***Manager's Message***

***By: Mark A. Suggs***

### ***Sunlight is free - Solar is not***

Solar power is one of the oldest productive sources of energy, so why isn't it utilized more in the generation of electricity? Most electric utilities are often criticized for not using enough "free" solar energy to power the grid.

There are major questions that must be addressed when solar power is compared to nuclear, coal and natural gas as a viable alternative. For instance, who pays for the necessary backup generation for solar power to ensure an uninterrupted supply of electrical energy?

#### *Obligation to serve*

Critics typically fail to acknowledge a fundamental statutory requirement for all electric utilities, the obligation to serve reliable and affordable electricity 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This obligation to serve requires electric utilities to provide safe, reliable electric service to all customers without discrimination. In addition, utilities must have plans in place to meet projected demand up to 20 years into the future. The remarkable success in meeting this obligation for more than 70 years has unfortunately lulled most of us to take for granted what is required to provide electricity for our homes and businesses.

Solar power is being responsibly incorporated into utility scale generation portfolios and at hundreds of small-scale locations throughout the state, but more importantly, all consumers are paying for their utility to keep the lights on whether or not the sun is shining.

#### *Marginal value at peak demand*

Solar power is only available for a few hours on sunny days. In winter, consumer demand for most North Carolina EMCs peaks in the morning hours before the sunrise. In summer, EMCs peak consumer demand is greatest from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., when solar power makes its daily decline toward zero. Simply put, for every kilowatt of solar panels installed, consumers are paying for almost a full kW of backup generation for when the sun isn't shining. Natural gas-fired turbines are the preferred backup source for solar generation, as they can be turned on quickly to meet demand, but these turbines and the fuel they use aren't free, and all consumers foot the bill to ensure they are ready when needed.

#### *Solar power doesn't count (significantly) to meet required generation reserves*

Utilities are also required to maintain a margin of surplus generation reserves, roughly 10-15 percent, to prevent interruption to power supply, and these reserves are paid for by consumers in monthly power bills. Intermittent resources like solar cannot count toward a utilities reserve margin in a meaningful way since it cannot be turned on at a moment's notice. In a nutshell, having solar power on the grid does not eliminate the need for investment in reliable, 24/7 resources like coal, nuclear and natural gas.

We hope this article has shed some light on the realities of solar power, and helps explain our headline "Sunlight is free...solar power is not." Cooperatives have two purposes: to provide safe, reliable electric energy to their members and to keep the cost for that energy as low as possible for all.

## Enjoy A Safe Start To Spring

As the spring season approaches, many will usher in the warmer weather by thoroughly cleaning their homes and tending to yard work. The Electrical Safety Foundation (ESFI) recommends homeowners ensure that electrical hazards are eliminated along with unwanted dust and clutter.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) provides the following safety tips:

- Carefully check the location of all overhead wires before using a ladder. All ladders, even those made of wood, that contact a power line can shock or electrocute people coming in contact with them.
- Unplug outdoor tools and appliances when not in use.
- Inspect power tools and appliances for frayed cords, broken plugs and cracked or broken housing. Repair or replace damaged items.
- Water does not mix with electricity. Avoid damp conditions - including wet grass - when using electricity.

The Electrical Safety Foundation (ESFI) recommends homeowners ensure that electrical hazards are eliminated along with unwanted dust and clutter.

They suggest you begin by checking the label inside the door or cover of your electrical service panel to see when your electrical system was last inspected. If the date has passed or is approaching, contact a licensed, qualified electrician to schedule an inspection.

- Be sure circuit breakers and fuses are correctly labeled with their amperage and their corresponding rooms, circuits or outlets. Use correct size and current rating for breakers/fuses.
- Increase your fire protection by having a licensed electrician replace your standard circuit breakers with arc fault circuit interrupters - AFCIs.
- Have your furnace cleaned and inspected annually by a licensed professional.
- Make sure all fuel-burning equipment, such as furnaces, stoves, and fireplaces, is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Check for excessive vibration or movement when the washing machine or dryer is operating. This can put stress on electrical connections.
- Make sure the area around your dryer is clutter free and that the dryer lint filter is cleaned after each load. Build up can be a fire starter.

Visit [www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org) for more tips on keeping your home and family safe this spring and beyond.

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## Storm Safety: When Thunderstorms and Tornadoes Strike

Beware. Spring can usher in more than April showers. Now through the summer months, thunderstorms can quickly roll in and tornadoes can touch down, often during the afternoon and evening hours, according to researchers at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Severe Storms Laboratory.

Follow these tips from NOAA and the American Red Cross to keep you and your home safe when tornadoes and severe thunderstorms come your way.

- Prepare for high winds by removing diseased and damaged tree limbs.
- Listen to local news or National Weather Service broadcasts to stay informed about tornado watches and warnings.
- If in a mobile home, immediately head to a sturdy shelter. Mobile homes are not safe places to take shelter during tornadoes or other severe winds.

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Pitt & Greene EMC will be closed Friday,  
April 14, 2017 in observance of Easter.



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task like changing the filters on your HVAC system makes your unit run more efficiently, keeping your house cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

#### *Take control of your energy savings*

Take a look at your programmable thermostat. When was the last time you checked to make sure it was programmed for the current season and family schedule? This is one of the best energy-saving tools at your fingertips. It enables you to fine tune the temperature during particular hours of the day. Many models allow you to differentiate between weekday and weekend schedules, and internet-connected thermostats can learn your schedule and make adjustments automatically. Most models come with an override option so you can make manual adjustments without losing overall programming. You can only achieve these efficiencies and savings if it is programmed properly and adjusted periodically to keep pace with changes in household routines.

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- Designate a family meeting place for shelter during and after a storm. If possible, go to your home's basement, a small interior room, or under stairs on the lowest level. Also, have a battery-operated weather radio handy along with emergency supplies.
- Unplug your electronics. Avoid using electrical equipment and corded telephones.
- Remember that there is no safe place outside during a severe storm. If you are caught in a storm while on the road, the American Red Cross urges drivers to turn their headlights on, try to safely exit the roadway, and park. Stay in the vehicle with your seat belt on and turn on the emergency flashers until the heavy rain ends. If thunder and lightning is occurring, avoid touching metal or other surfaces that conduct electricity in and outside the vehicle.
- Move or secure lawn furniture, trash cans, hanging plants or anything else that can be picked up by the wind and become a projectile.
- Stay safe after a storm. Remain indoors at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder.

Also, stay away from downed power lines and avoid flooded areas, power lines could be submerged and still live with electricity. Report them to Pitt & Greene EMC at 252-753-3128 immediately.

### 2017 Down East Walk to Defeat ALS®

WHEN: Saturday, April 15, 2017 @ 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

WHERE: East Carolina University, Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium, Greenville, NC 27858

Walk to Defeat ALS® (Lou Gehrig's disease). The Walk to Defeat ALS is the #1 way to empower yourself to lend support to those fighting and caring for someone living with ALS. Each year, nation-wide, hundreds of thousands of people come together to raise funds to support care service programs and cutting-edge research and to advance nationwide advocacy for people with ALS and their families. The money that we raise from the Walks in North Carolina enables us to provide care services for over 500 people living with ALS and their families free of charge in North Carolina. REGISTRATION: Visit <http://web.alsa.org/downeast> or call (877) 568-4347 CONTACT: Development Specialist, Stephanie West, [stephanie@alsnc.org](mailto:stephanie@alsnc.org), 919-390-0121.

De lunes a viernes de 8:00 a.m. a 5:00 p.m.  
252-753-3128 / 1-800-622-1362 / 252-747-7600

Co-op Office Hours  
Monday - Friday - 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
252-753-3128 / 1-800-622-1362 / 252-747-7600

CORTES DE SUMINISTRO ELÉCTRICO Y EMERGENCIAS:  
Durante fines de semana, días festivos y después del horario de oficina  
252-753-8778

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