



Clearing the Air

Clogged air filters could add \$82 to your electric bill every year. Checking, changing, or cleaning your filter once a month saves money and extends the life of your home’s heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system.

More than half of your monthly energy bill goes toward keeping your home comfortable. While air filters prevent dust and allergens from clogging your HVAC system, dirt will still build up over time. If left unchecked, a dirty filter forces the HVAC system to work harder to push conditioned air through tight spaces. This results in higher energy bills and potentially system failure.

Filter Facts

Air filters protect HVAC systems by collecting dust and lose dirt from the air. Successful filters have a short lifespan. The better a filter catches dirt, the faster it gets clogged and must be cleaned or replaced. Leaving a dirty air filter in place cuts a home’s air quality and reduces HVAC system airflow.

While removing a clogged filter relieves pressure on the system, the system can’t perform well without one. Unfiltered dust and grime accumulate on critical parts like the evaporator coil, causing unnecessary wear and tear.

Monthly Check-up

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) advises checking an air filter once a month and replacing it at least every three months. It’s critical to inspect and replace filters before seasons of heavy use like summer and winter.

If you have pets or smokers in the home, filters clog quickly. Remodeling projects add more dirt than normal; a filter may need to be changed before the average three-month lifespan expires.

Turn your heating and cooling system off before checking your filter. Slide the filter out of your duct work, and look for layers of hair and dirt. Run a finger across the filter. If the finger comes away dirty or there’s a line left on the filter, it’s time for a change.

When replacing the filter, make sure the arrow on the filter indicating the direction of the airflow points toward the blower motor. To help schedule monthly check-ups, write the date on the side of the filter so you know when it needs to be checked again. Once you’ve made the change, turn your system back on.

Filtering Choices

Shopping for a new filter? Before you leave home, write down the size printed on the side of your current filter. If you get a filter that’s too small, dirt will get around the barrier and invade your system.

There are several different types of filters and levels of efficiency. Filters are either flat or pleated; pleated filters offer extra surface area to hold dirt, making them more efficient.

Continued on Pg. 3

*Pitt & Greene EMC will be closed Friday,
April 2nd in observance of Easter.*





Manager's Message

By: Mark A. Suggs

Home Solar Offerings Warrant Careful Consideration

North Carolina may be home to some unscrupulous marketers misleading consumers with offers to go solar and eliminate the electric bill. When you consider all capital and finance costs, solar is not cheaper than residential and small commercial electric rates offered by North Carolina utilities. Even after applying rebates and tax credits, it could take years to break even.

Study the offers. Beware of sales gimmicks that predict electric rates will rise 4 to 6 percent annually. Pitt and Greene EMC's last rate adjustment was over eleven years ago. Ask for actual installation results of the kilowatt-hours to be delivered by the system over time as well as a list of clients whom you can contact and get actual comparative results and experiences. Request plain language explanations of pricing terms over the life of the contract, warranties, operations, maintenance costs and responsibilities. The lowest cost option for solar arrays may not even be a lease but paying cash or using a home equity loan and taking the 30 percent federal tax credit oneself.

Think twice about solar back-up systems. Before investing in a solar battery backup system at \$5000 to \$10,000 every 10 years or so, be sure to weigh that cost against more practical investments in nonperishable foods and other goods necessary to ride out those rare power outages. If backup power is necessary, a standby generator is likely more cost-effective.

Speak with real estate appraisers. Even if cost calculations suggest you will break even in 15 to 20 years; it may not be a good idea to install solar if you may move before then. A solar array may be a selling point in some communities, but in others it can be a liability that harms resale value. Few buyers are willing to have arrays on their houses, much less willing to assume leases of older, less efficient equipment.

What about roof replacement? If the roof must be replaced the panels have to be removed and then reinstalled after the new roof is put on. What will this cost?

Be aware of restrictions. Some developments may require that solar arrays not be visible from the road. Considering the arrays perform best when facing south, this may limit your options. If you have trees that shade your home, your house may stay cooler with the shade and save you more money than cutting down trees to install solar. Make sure the orientation of your roof offers full exposure to the path of the sun, otherwise you will not get the full benefit of the panels.

Before investing a large amount of money in a home solar system in hopes of saving a few dollars a month, have an energy audit performed on your home to see if there are other things that could be done to save energy costs every month. As consumer protections develop, technology improves and prices decline, solar energy shows great promise under the right application. Please, be an informed investor and make your choices wisely. Don't hesitate to call us if you have questions regarding your plans.

Don't toy with your safety!

When you are playing outdoors, keep a safe distance from power lines, substations and other equipment your electric co-op uses to send electricity to your home.

Flying remote controlled toys are a great way to have fun, but accidentally making contact with a power line or other electrical equipment can be dangerous and in some cases, even deadly.

- Never fly kites, or remote controlled toys near power lines.
- Stay away from power lines, meters, transformers and electrical boxes.
- Never climb trees near power lines.
- If you get something stuck in a power line, call your electric co-op.
- Never touch or go near a downed power line.

Continued from Pg. 1

The most common filters use layered fiberglass fibers reinforced with metal grating. Some filters boost efficiency by using polyester fibers. Electrostatic filters are made from positively- and negatively-charged fibers and capture smaller debris—the charge actively pulls particles from the air like iron filings onto a magnet. No power connection is required, and the charge does not fade over time. The filters best able to capture small debris are high efficiency particulate arrestance (HEPA) filters, but these deluxe filters are mainly used in hospitals and office buildings, not in homes.

Air filters are rated by a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV). Ranging from one to twenty, this scale gauges a filter's effectiveness at blocking debris. Low MERV-rated filters offer high airflow into a cooling or heating system, but only catch large air particles. A higher rating isn't always better—those filters block more dirt but also reduce system airflow. Most experts recommend filters with a MERV 6 or higher.

Manufacturers are not required to post MERV on filter packaging. Brands like 3M's Filtrete instead list levels of microparticle performance rating—higher numbers mean the filter catches more particles. No matter what system a store or manufacturer uses, better and more expensive filters mean higher MERV scores.

If a family member suffers from allergies, a high MERV filter keeps out excess dander, smoke, and other allergens. Ask a heating and cooling professional what type of filter works best for your home and family needs.

Once you find a filter that works well in your home, it's a good idea to keep spare filters on hand. Basic filters cost anywhere from \$2 to \$10; electrostatic filters may range from \$18 to \$25.

More Efficiency Boosters

Before summer hits, clean cooling system coils inside and outside the home. Leaves, dirt, and other debris gather around a home's air conditioner throughout fall and winter months. These intruders keep the coils from operating at top efficiency, both shortening the lifespan of the unit and ratcheting up summer cooling bills.

Just as clogged air filters force your system to work harder, blocked vents strain your system. Clean air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators. Make sure air ducts are not blocked by furniture, rugs, or window treatments.

Want more ways to save? Take the home energy savings tour and see how little changes add up to big savings at www.TogetherWeSave.com.

Important Sales and Use Tax Notice

A purchaser (farmers, manufacturers and commercial laundries) that is eligible for a preferential tax rate on electricity should complete and furnish the seller/electricity supplier Form E-595E, Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement Certificate of Exemption, to take advantage of qualifying reductions.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Don't keep your refrigerator too cold. The Department of Energy recommends a temperature setting of 35 to 38 degrees for the fresh food compartment and zero degrees for the freezer. Make sure the refrigerator doors are sealed airtight to maximize efficiency.

Source: www.energy.gov



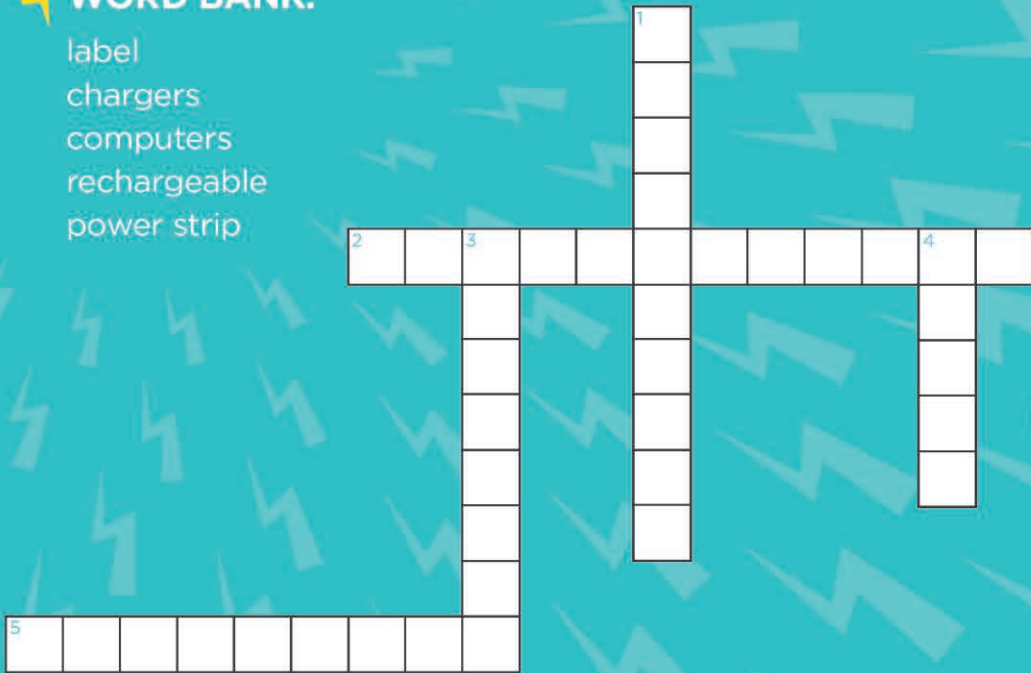
ELECTRONICS EFFICIENCY CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Did you know there are ways you can reduce your electronics energy use? Complete the crossword puzzle below to learn about electronics efficiency.

WORD BANK:

- label
- chargers
- computers
- rechargeable
- power strip



1 DOWN: Use a _____ with an on/off switch when powering multiple electronics to easily manage energy use.

2 ACROSS: For devices that require batteries, use _____ ones, which are more cost-effective and environmentally friendly.

3 DOWN: Unplug electronic products, like _____, when you're not using them.

4 DOWN: Electronics that include the ENERGY STAR® _____ are the most energy efficient.

5 ACROSS: Many _____ come with a sleep mode or power management feature, which can save \$30 on annual energy costs.

ANSWER KEY 1. DOWN-POWER STRIP 2. ACROSS- RECHARGEABLE 3. DOWN- CHARGERS 4. DOWN- LABEL 5. ACROSS- COMPUTERS

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

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

POWER OUTAGES & EMERGENCIAS
During weekends, holidays and after office hours
252-753-8778