



United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

United Electric Cooperative, Inc.
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Guest Column



Are you concerned about your winter electric bills?

By Kristy Smith, *Energy Management Advisor*

TAKE a look around the room you're in right now. Go ahead, I'll wait. What do you see? Is there a space heater running continuously in the corner? Is the thermostat on the wall set to 75 degrees? Are the curtains moving from a drafty window or door? If you saw any of these things, you might receive a shock when your electric bill arrives next month.

Every home's largest energy user is its heating system (or cooling in the summer). Your heating system doesn't just include your furnace. It also includes that space heater in the corner of the basement family room. Things that cause your furnace and space heaters to stay on longer (and increase your electric bill) include drafts and setting the thermostat above 70 degrees.

There are several things you can do to better manage your electric bill this time of year that cost little to no money at all.

Begin where it counts most

Remember that drafty window and/or door? Reducing air infiltration is a great cost-saving measure when it comes to getting control of your monthly heating bills. Simple fixes with weather stripping and caulking around doors and windows, or even keeping a rug rolled against a drafty threshold, will make a drastic difference in your energy bills with minimal cost and hassle.

Other common areas responsible for air infiltration are dryer vents, piping that enters the home and exhaust fans.

Gaps around pipes and vents can also be sealed easily with caulk. Seems simple enough, right? But we're not done yet.

The dreaded space heater

There are instances when a space heater is the better option, but you have to know how to use one first. An increase in your electric bill will occur, but you can hold down the cost. Space heaters are not a "set it and forget it" item. Even with a thermostat, a space heater should only be used selectively to supplement heat in a small area



THERMOSTAT: A programmable thermostat that can automatically set back the temperature at night and when the house is unoccupied during the day can help reduce heating cost by up to 10 percent.

when needed. Most space heaters use 1,500 watts to operate, so don't be fooled by shiny boxes claiming that they'll save all kinds of money on your heating bill. If that heater runs one hour, it is going to use 1 1/2 kilowatt-hours (kWh) each hour it runs. That adds up fast. In one day, it will use 36 kWh if it runs all day.

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Guest Column

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If you are wondering about using that space heater in your basement family room, ask yourself these questions: Is this room heated directly or indirectly some other way? How big is the room? How often do you use this room? If the room is heated some other way, space heat is a viable option for supplemental heat on a really cold day or when you are using the room. If the room is large, a convection-style space heater is a better option because it will heat the room and the people in it more effectively. If you only use the room a couple times per week, make sure you are only turning the space heater on when you are in the room and shutting it off when you leave. Which brings us to space heater safety: make sure the heater model you buy has an automatic shut-off if it becomes overheated or it is tipped over, and never use an extension cord in conjunction with a space heater as this will overheat the unit.



POWER STRIP: Locate the power strip supplying the numerous electronic devices connected at your entertainment or computer center so you can shut it off in order to eliminate the power consumed by “phantom loads” when the equipment is not in use.

tion. Once you go beyond 4 degrees, your furnace (or air conditioner) will have to work harder to recuperate. Using a programmable thermostat that allows you to set different programming for the seasons and family schedules will help you make the energy saving easier.

What about lightbulbs? You’ve probably heard a lot about switching to LED lighting to save money. LED bulbs have the longest operational life of any lightbulb on the market. They use far less wattage for the same amount of light, and they’ve come down in price considerably. A standard incandescent bulb uses 60 watts, a CFL equivalent uses 13 watts and an LED equivalent uses 6.3 watts. That’s a lot of light for a longer time, and it makes “cents” to operate (only around 10 cents a month

if you run it five hours every day). Another area that will help you save even more is a place not many folks think about: electronics. Anything that displays a clock, charges a battery or

has a remote control uses energy even when you are not actively using it. Some experts call this stand-by loss or vampire load. Energy vampires include your new 4K TV, game console, cable/satellite box, and various chargers. I once measured the standby loss of an entertainment system including the items I previously mentioned. Can you guess how many extra dollars per month this cost? \$2? \$5? \$10? Try \$15 per month. Have you put this article down to go unplug things?

Every home has some steps that can be taken to improve energy efficiency. While you’re stuck inside this winter, take some time to walk through your home and address some of the energy saving steps I mentioned. For more information, you can also visit United Electric’s website at unitedpa.com and click on the “Home Energy Library” or the “TouchstoneEnergy.com” link. There, you will find detailed advice on how to make your home more energy efficient. You can also call me, Kristy Smith, at 1-888-581-8969, extension 8507, if you have questions on your energy use. Improving the energy efficiency of your home may help you worry just a little bit less about your electric bill. ⚡

Sources: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and Touchstone Energy

Little things add up

When was the last time you checked your thermostat setting? Probably the last time there was an extremely cold day. Did you change the setting? An increase of a couple of degrees really isn’t going to make a whole lot of difference in your heating cost on a normal winter day, but on an unseasonably cold day, this could mean several dollars a day more on top of the additional energy that would already have to be expended for the normal set point. Setting back the temperature at night and when no one is home is a good way to save energy. The “rule of thumb” is 4 degrees in either direc-

A promotional graphic for the United Electric Annual Meeting. On the left, the text reads: "Mark Your Calendar United Electric Annual Meeting At the Brady Township Community Center Luthersburg, Pa May 16, 2018, 7:00 PM". On the right, there is a large, 3D-style calendar page showing the date "May 16" and the time "at: 7:00 PM".

Quality vs. Quantity

By Glenn Schuckers

WHEN is a little more too much? I sometimes think about all the times when I should have stopped when something was done, but I wanted to add just a little bit more, when quantity was more important than quality.

I have had many chances to repair something that had to do with nuts and bolts. When I replace something like that, I usually tighten the nut or bolt to what “feels” right. Depending on how hard it has been to use the wrench and the length of the handle, that can be a lot of things. If it was in a hard place to get to or the space would only accommodate a very short wrench handle, “tight” might have been looser than if there were lots of room or if the wrench handle was longer. When that happens, the nut or bolt gets a lot tighter — sometimes too tight. More often than I’m going to admit, that little extra pull leaves me with one of two things — a stripped nut or a broken bolt.

That is just one time when a “little” more was too much.

The same thing can happen when adding fertilizer or lime in the garden. My favorite “fertilizer” is the kind that originates with cows, horses or chickens. A number of years ago, I had a chance to get a few loads of “ripe” chicken manure. I proceeded to put a heavy layer on a corn field, thinking that if 2 inches of fertilizer would be good, 6 inches would be three times as good.

The result was cornstalks that were about 8 feet tall, which I thought was great until I discovered the stalks had no ears of corn. That happens when plants get too much nitrogen.

All good cooks know a pinch of salt may be just the right seasoning for a dish, but two pinches are too many. The same goes for things like garlic, pepper and almost any spice. A little goes a long way, and once the spice is

in, it cannot be taken out. Many years ago, a wise attorney told me that once a jury has heard something, it never “unhears” it. His exact quote may have been, “Once the garlic is in the soup, you can’t take it out.”

But this habit of adding a little more shows up everywhere.

Take the local television news. At one time, stations like the ones in Altoona or Johnstown had a 30-minute news show late in the evening that covered all the area news events, a short segment on sports and a weather report. They had a few reporters, a sports correspondent and the favorite weatherman. (In those days, unfortunately, most reporters on any segment were males.) They covered important events, robberies, fires, accidents, and things like arrests and trials. And they covered everything the producers deemed important in 30 minutes.

Then someone decided 30 minutes was not long enough, and they went to an hour. That allowed them to cover more news and so they added more reporters. With those changes, producers seemed to think one weather report needed to be expanded to two, then three and then four. But the number of events in the area covered by the station was probably about the same as when the broadcast lasted 30 minutes.

Unless I miss my guess, the number of “newsworthy” events has not changed all that much in the past decade, but the news shows that report the events have now grown to 90 minutes. In other words, these broadcasts cover the same amount of content, but the time they spend talking about that content has multiplied three times.

Their solution? Repeat the same content, the same stories, the same film over and over about three times per broadcast. And give a weather “report” (not forecast) about every

10 minutes. So instead of one actual forecast in one 30-minute show, we get eight or nine in 90 minutes, all of which say essentially the same thing.

The same thing goes for professional sports teams. They all draw from the same talent pool, and that pool has been about the same for the past 50 or so years. Colleges provide the talent pool for most pro football teams; colleges, high schools, and semi pro leagues for baseball, hockey, and basketball. In other words the number of players available to fill the ranks of professional sports teams is, if not limited, at least not readily expandable.

The number of cities that want the money that these teams generate, however, is very expandable. When one city sees that a professional team brings in millions of dollars in revenue and taxable dollars, they understandably want in on it.

In 1970, there were 26 professional football teams in 26 cities. Today, there are 32 teams in 32 cities. Since there are over 50 players on each team, that increase of six teams means there are over 300 more professional players now than there were in 1970.

So if you are thinking that the players are not as good now as they used to be, you are probably right. Bigger? Yes. Stronger? Yes. Faster? Probably. But in terms of pure skill, it is logic, not opinion, that drawing more players from the same pool means that some players who are on teams today probably would not have been on any team two generations ago.

The same principle applies to baseball, basketball and hockey, all of which have seen an increase in the number of teams brought about by cities’ thirst for money.

Just about the same thing applies everywhere. The supply of dramatic writers, comedians, directors, and actors is a finite number, and as the

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Rustic Views

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number of shows increases, their quality decreases. It is not that we like lower-quality programs; it is a simple law of physics that as numbers increase, quality decreases.

How much is too much? That depends on what we want. If we want 1,000 television channels, two-hour local news shows and a pro team in every city, we need to resign ourselves to a decreasing level of quality in all of them.

I would only hope that at some point we will decide that quality is more important than quantity and demand less quantity and more quality. ☀



Glenn Schuckers, a longtime member of United Electric, operated Schuckers' Orchard in Luthersburg until the mid-1990s. He is a retired high school teacher and a contributing writer for *The Courier Express*.

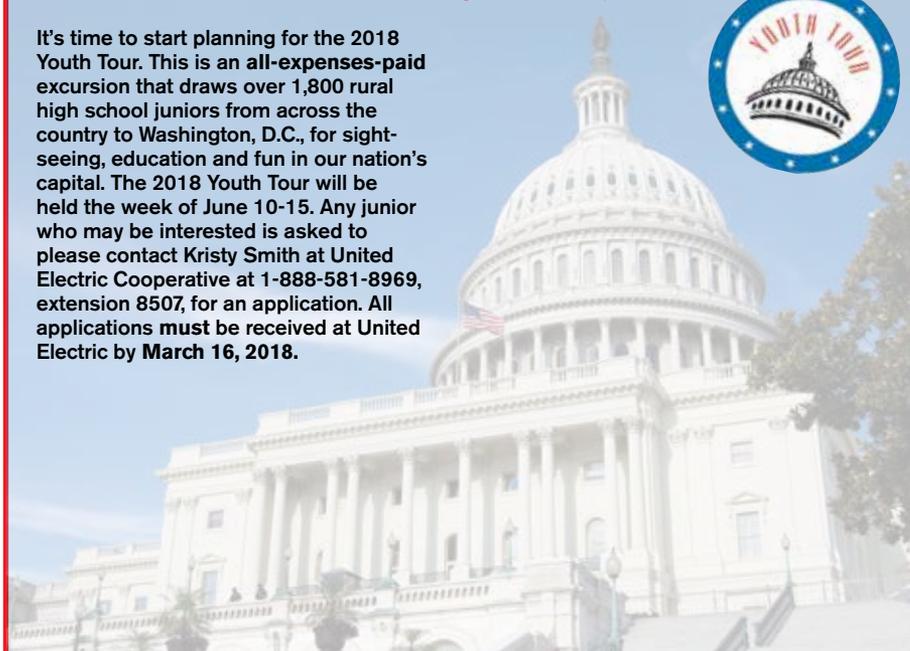
We are pleased to have Glenn provide our *Penn Lines* readers with his take on rural life.

2018 Rural Electric Youth Tour

ATTENTION – High school juniors



It's time to start planning for the 2018 Youth Tour. This is an all-expenses-paid excursion that draws over 1,800 rural high school juniors from across the country to Washington, D.C., for sight-seeing, education and fun in our nation's capital. The 2018 Youth Tour will be held the week of June 10-15. Any junior who may be interested is asked to please contact Kristy Smith at United Electric Cooperative at 1-888-581-8969, extension 8507, for an application. All applications must be received at United Electric by **March 16, 2018**.





ATTENTION ALL STUDENTS!

United Electric Cooperative, Inc.
is proud to present the
“Shine the Light” Scholarship
program for the third year

Two well-established cooperative principles involve concern for communities and education and training for our members. In keeping with these traditions, the United Electric Cooperative Board of Directors has decided to reinvest unclaimed capital credits back into the community by providing educational scholarships to our members.

As a result of lobbying efforts by the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association in Harrisburg, electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania are now able to use this unclaimed money within their local communities. These funds come from unclaimed capital credits belonging to former members who have not been able to be located for three years. A legislative change now allows the cooperatives to use these funds locally for specific causes.

United Electric Cooperative is offering scholarships to members and dependents of members who have been members for at least one year prior to Dec. 31. Scholarships are for advanced education at an accredited university or technical school. Students must be working toward a minimum of a certificate through master's degree or higher. Opportunities include adults.



All students*, including adult learners*, who are attending or planning to attend a university or technical school are eligible to apply. For application and details, please see our website at www.unitedpa.com or contact Kristy Smith at 1-888-581-8969, extension 8507, by May 1, 2018.



***Directors and employees of United Electric Cooperative, Inc. are not eligible.**