



United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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Guest Column



How do we help you save?

By Kristy Smith
 Marketing & Communications Supervisor

DID YOU know that United Electric has been saving money on power costs since 1994, thanks to you, our members? Through members' participation in our voluntary load management (demand response) and the Electric Shift programs, we have been working together to achieve some amazing savings for all our members!

Each year, United must purchase wholesale power to supply our members' needs based on the highest energy use, or peak demand periods, throughout the year. The first line item on your electric bill shows exactly what it costs United Electric to purchase the power to meet our members' needs each month. Last year, purchased power costs totaled over \$9 million. However, it could have cost almost \$10 million if not for members' participation in the load management and the Electric Shift programs.

Affordability

United has always focused on keeping rates low, which is why we work to reduce demand during peak hours. Electricity is much more expensive to purchase during times of the day when use, or demand, is high. The Electric Shift notices that you hear on local radio stations during the summer tell our membership when it is important to reduce load in their homes to prevent us from having to purchase power at a higher cost throughout the following year.

Our load management program is used year-round in conjunction with the Electric Shift program, which is used



A SAVINGS?: Electric tankless units only use energy when someone needs hot water, which sounds great, right? The problem is, tankless systems require a great amount of energy to heat water quickly.

only during the summer months when peaks are at their highest. During peak demand periods, a power line carrier signal is sent over the electric lines to demand response units (DRUs) attached to water heaters and heating/cooling equipment, which turns those devices off until the peak subsides. This ensures that during the highest peak demand periods, United Electric (along with the other electric co-ops in Pennsylvania and New Jersey) are reducing load in order to provide our members with the most affordable power possible.

In addition to the lower wholesale
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power cost for all of our members, participants in the load management program receive \$36 in bill credits annually and can purchase a 50-gallon, high-efficiency water heater for only \$100 when they need to replace their old one. The water heaters can be picked up at three convenient locations and come with a pre-installed DRU, if you don't already have one. We encourage all of our members to help keep power costs low by joining the nearly 4,000 members already participating in load management.

Demand education

Kilowatt-hours (kWh) go hand-in-hand with kilowatts (kW), which is how demand is measured and billed. Everything in your home has a kW output, which is similar to horsepower on a motor. The more energy an item uses, the higher the kW. We constantly try to educate our members on any new household appliances, electronics, or gadgets that may have an impact on kWh and kW required in their home.

Some high kW energy users concern us more than others, like electric tankless hot water systems. These are also referred to as instant hot water systems. They typically range from smaller systems requiring 12 kW, to larger "whole-house" systems, which are sometimes as high as 36 kW. These tankless systems only use energy when someone needs hot water, which sounds great, right? The problem is, tankless systems require a great amount of energy to heat water quickly.

A 50-gallon hot water tank, like we provide, uses 4,500 watts, or 4.5 kW. A tankless system can use as much as 36,000 watts, or 36 kW, which is eight times the demand of a normal tank. This could be as much as the entire load of the home before the tankless system was installed! The impact is not only staggering to the demand for electricity in a peak time period, but also shocking when a member discovers that their internal electric panel cannot

handle the additional load. Who loves dimming lights?

Research

Even after upgrading your electric panel and wiring, members may still have issues with dimming lights. To put it into perspective, a typical heat-pump air conditioner has a start-up amperage of 60 amps (or 14 kW), which produces a momentary voltage drop or a slight dimming of lighting. A tankless hot water system can draw as much as twice that starting current, and that's for as long as someone is using the hot water.

Other factors to consider include mineral deposit build-up due to water quality inside the tankless unit, installation and maintenance costs (don't forget possible electric service upgrades), and the fact that even the largest tankless model cannot supply enough hot water for simultaneous, multiple uses. For example, you may experience a lukewarm shower while the dishwasher is running. Many industry pros also recommend that tankless models be serviced once per year by a qualified technician.

Actual costs will vary based on individual lifestyles, but you should also be aware that while yes, a tankless model is slightly more efficient than a 50-gallon storage tank, the savings in electric cost may be only about \$30 per year for the average family, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Compare that savings with the additional

costs of a tankless water heater.

Next time you are considering replacing your hot water heater, don't forget about our load management program. Not only can you get a replacement water heater for \$100, but you will also be helping to contribute to the \$18 million-plus that United and our members have saved in purchased power costs since the program's inception. Call our office to discuss your situation for personalized advice or check out our cooperative's website (unitedpa.com) for energy calculators and a virtual home audit.

See more information on energy efficiency and home improvements at touchstoneenergy.com and energy.gov.



PHOTO BY KRISTY SMITH

LOAD MANAGEMENT: This standard electric hot water tank is equipped with a demand response unit, which helps United Electric and its members better manage peak demand periods during the summer.

Rustic Views

Preserve it and it preserves

By Glenn Schuckers

PRESERVES are those wonderful jars of strawberry, apple, raspberry, blueberry, or peach concoctions that I can spread on toast or bread, spoon over ice cream, or just eat out of a jar. I think some people confuse jelly and preserves, but to me there is just one difference.

Jelly is smooth, and does not have any lumps or chunks, while preserves have some lumps or chunks of the fruit in it. Either way, my mouth starts watering just thinking of both of them. Since there is no need to remove the chunks and bits of fruit, preserves may be a bit easier to make, but either way September is the prime time for them.

But making preserves or jellies is just one way to use the abundance of fruits and vegetables a lot of us have this month. Off the top of my head, I can think of five ways to “preserve” some of that summer goodness.

I know I write this every summer, but whenever I think of preserving fruits or vegetables, I cannot help but think of my seventh-grade history teacher/Sunday School teacher, Clyde Burkhouse. He was a former coal miner who had an injury that left him with a lifelong limp. Every fall, he would tell us, in answer to the question about what they would do with all the corn they grew, “We eat what we can and what we can’t, we can.” He knew that would always entertain seventh-graders and bring a smile to everyone else.

But the truth is, a lot of folks still “can” fruits, vegetables and meat every fall. Just look at the shelves full of canning supplies in all the grocery stores and even farm supply stores this month. And a couple of months ago, I heard some women saying they could not find a product they needed to make strawberry jelly. So even in our modern world,



PHOTO BY GLENN SCHUCKERS
A TASTE OF SUMMER: Tomato sauce, peach preserves and pickles are all ready for winter.

it looks as though people like some of the old-fashioned ways.

We especially like to “can” peaches in August and September. I know I could eat a whole jar of them later on in the winter, but then I’d have to hide the empty jar. There is almost no end to the things people can “can.” It is a little more involved than freezing, but canned fruit has a flavor that’s hard to match.

Speaking of freezing, we usually freeze things like strawberries, blueberries, corn, string beans, applesauce, and even zucchini and tomatoes. There are only two drawbacks to freezing: having a freezer with empty space in it and electricity.

The latter has not been a factor for many years as the electric company has figured out how to maintain a steady current. The last time we had a prolonged outage was during a severe winter in the late 1970s, but at that time the freezer was so packed that all we had to do was keep it closed for the week the power was off and everything was fine. With that in mind, freezing food is probably the simplest way to preserve it so long as there is space in the freezer.

But there are lots of people who prefer to use older methods and the taste of things done those ways. They can dehydrate fruit, which is simply removing the water so that the fruit or vegetables will last longer. Although I’ve never dehydrated them, I have tasted dried fruit and will agree that it tastes very good.

In addition to dehydrating, I know people who “pickle” lots of different fruits or vegetables. My only first-hand experience with that is making “lime pickles” from my Aunt Alta’s recipe. It uses fresh cucumbers, lime, and spices

and takes about two days to make. The recipe is pretty easy (a quality important to me) and has been a great way to use the excess cucumbers that vines almost always produce. In fact, I did not plant cucumbers this year because I knew what would happen: They would produce a bushel or so of cucumbers. I would not want to waste any of them, so the excess number of canned lime pickle jars would grow.

And canning, freezing, drying and pickling are not the only ways to preserve foods, either. Before there were freezers or stoves, people would smoke all sorts of foods, just as they have smoked meat for years.

Just about every farm up through the first half of the 20th century had a “smokehouse.” Its purpose was to provide a place where meats could be hung up with lots of wood smoke.

Today, most folks I know are familiar with things like smoked ham, smoked salmon, smoked bacon and smoked cheese. The assumption today is that smoking is just another way to change or enhance flavor, but in the “good old days,” the main reason for smoking food was to preserve it. I am sure it was a lot easier to smoke a whole ham or side of beef than it was to can or dry it. Once the meat was smoked, it could be hung lots of places and be used and preserved for quite a while.

So whether my preference is to can, freeze, dry, pickle, or smoke my harvest this month, or maybe just store it in a cool basement, the time I spend in preserving it, like the time it took to grow and harvest it, will be rewarded in the weeks and months to come. And for people who prefer to can or freeze or dry or pickle or smoke their foods, don’t bother telling them they can buy it easier (and maybe cheaper) in a store. They won’t hear you, and even if they do, it won’t make any difference. ☀



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.



USING A GENERATOR?

8 DANGEROUS MISTAKES PEOPLE MAKE



1 IN ENCLOSED SPACES

Always use it in a well-ventilated area.



2 NEAR WINDOWS OR DOORS

Place it at least 20 feet away from windows and doors.



3 IN A GARAGE

Even if the door is up, never use a generator in a garage.



4 IN THE ELEMENTS

Run it on a dry surface under a canopy-like structure (but not in a carport).



5 PLUGGED INTO A WALL OUTLET

This can be deadly to you, family members, neighbors or utility workers.



6 WITH THE WRONG EXTENSION CORD

Use a properly rated cord to plug appliances into a generator.



7 WITHOUT CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) TESTERS

CO detectors should be on every level of your home (test them monthly).



8 IN DISREPAIR

Make sure your generator is well-maintained and in good working order.



Safe Electricity.org®