

Tips to keep heating costs down

Keeping warm air inside and the cold air out can be relatively inexpensive, according to Barbara Buffaloe, a University of Missouri Extension housing specialist.

In many homes, a lot of heat escapes through the roof, cracks in walls, and gaps around windows, doors and pipes. Homeowners can ease the shock of high utility costs by reclaiming some of that lost heat.

Twelve inches of attic insulation is recommended in Missouri, Buffaloe said. Exposed air ducts in the attic allow heat to dissipate even before it enters the house, making the furnace work harder, so wrap or cover these ducts with insulation.

"Depending on the size of your house, for a couple hundred dollars you can probably save 10 to 15 percent on your winter heating bill," she said.

Weatherstrip your doors and apply caulk around pipes. A few tubes of caulk, which cost \$3 or \$4 each, could save you several hundred dollars, Buffaloe said.

Lifestyle can also play a role in reducing heating bills. Open south-facing curtains during sunny days to benefit from free solar heat, Buffaloe said. Set the thermostat a degree or two lower. For each degree you lower the thermostat, you can save an estimated 3 percent in heating fuel costs.

A thermostat setting of 65 to 68 degrees provides enough heat for normal daytime activity, although children and the elderly may need higher temperatures. Because people need less heat when sleeping, Buffaloe recommends a thermostat setting of 60 degrees for nighttime hours.

Have a reputable specialist service your furnace before the heating season; this could reduce your fuel bill as much as 10 percent. If the furnace is fired by oil or gas, make sure the furnace, flue outlets and filters are cleaned or changed and the motor is in working order. Check furnace filters every two months during the heating season.

Source: Robert Thomas, Information Specialist, Cooperative Media Group, University of Missouri

Vernonia Cares says "Thank you"

Thanks to numerous donors, Vernonia Cares Food Bank reported that 183 Holiday Food Boxes were distributed on December 22. Each food box contained the basic groceries, including a turkey, for a Christmas meal, for families in the Vernonia area.

Donations came from many sources, both business and private, including \$1800 given at

Sentry Market through the "check stand giving" program. "It is one of the great pleasures of working at our local food bank," said Director Sandy Welch, "to see the extreme generosity of our community. Thanks, donors, for brightening our community's Christmas celebration. You prove how much you care!"

Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer, General Manager,
West Oregon Electric Cooperative



High Bills and Disconnects

We are receiving a lot of inquiries from our members asking why their electric bills are high. The explanation is simple, when the temperature drops, the amount of electricity used to heat a home increases dramatically. When printing out a daily usage for the month, members are quickly finding out that they have used considerably more electricity during the days when we had extremely cold temperatures in December and January. We were in single digits and the teens for weeks. Mother Nature once again has a negative effect on our power usage. BPA, whom we purchase our power from, experienced an all time high for power demand during the extreme cold stretch, and this was reflected in our power bill from them.

Some were finding the minimum balance due on their account was high since we did not do our normal disconnects during the holidays. Unfortunately some of our members wait until the last day to pay or are disconnected before we get payment. This is usually a two month balance. While trying to be helpful during the holidays and the extremely low temperatures, we did not disconnect people for non-pay in the month of December. This meant that members who chose not to pay anything that month found themselves now three months behind.

To avoid disconnect fees, reconnect fees, and advance payments, it is absolutely crucial that members come in or call and pay the minimum required amount or make arrangements before the last day to pay. Communication with us is essential so that we can work with our members. Choosing not to communicate will end up costing more money to those who are going to be

disconnected.

Once you are scheduled for a non-pay disconnect, there will be fees assessed to cover our costs on the day of disconnect. Between phone calls, notices, staff time to prepare the disconnect orders and roll the trucks, there are costs incurred to the rest of the Co-op and its members that must be covered by those who create the costs. Our policies are there to protect the Co-op and the membership financially. The only way to accomplish this is making sure everyone pays their fair share of costs for power, system maintenance, system construction, and overhead.

While we take very seriously our financial responsibility to our member/owners, we are not without sympathy for the economic struggles that many of our members have and are experiencing, especially with the turbulent times we are facing with costs for everything escalating. For those who are struggling and need some assistance, we urge you not to wait until you are disconnected to ask for help. At that point costs have been incurred that we must recover so the options available to us to provide assistance are greatly reduced.

If you know you are going to have difficulties paying all or part of your bill, please contact us and let us work out a solution or guide you to places that can help. We work with several agencies that provide energy assistance. In fact, every year our staff works to raise funds for one of our local agencies that provide assistance and a donation is also made by our Board of Directors to provide energy assistance for our members. So please contact us before you get to the disconnect stage, and let us work with you to find the right solution for you.



Meyer's Auto Body, Inc
503-429-0248
493 Bridge St, Vernonia, OR

Presidents Day
February 15

Mariolino's

Now Serving
Ice Cream Treats



Banna Splits, Sundaes, Root Beer Floats
Thick Milk Shakes, Hot Fudge Sundaes

721 Madison Ave., Vernonia • 503-429-5018

Action Ads

INEXPENSIVE - EFFECTIVE

503-429-9410

\$4.50 for the first
10 words, then just
10¢ for each
additional word