

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

HUNTINGDON/MARTINSBURG/SHADE GAP OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Thursday
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Close to the hearth



by Wayne Miller
President & CEO

AS 2009 comes to a close, most of us will likely consider it a red-letter year, filled with stomach-wrenching financial volatility and equally stomach-wrenching political theater.

If the world seems a bit overwhelming this year, then perhaps it's just an apt reminder for all of us to focus on what's really important in our lives: family,

friends, faith and good health. And there's no better time to do that than now.

As once-leafy trees expose their bare limbs, we're able to ponder the longer, clearer view. As temperatures plummet, we're able to gather at the hearth ... to read, reflect, share meals and memories with loved ones (and perhaps even to indulge in a long winter's nap).

Each month, I typically write an editorial that focuses on what the co-op is doing and what our members can do to save energy and money or preserve our environment. Often, I'll mention one of the programs or services we offer (or will soon offer) that will help Valley and its consumers move into a new era of electric distribution.

Well, for once, I'm not going to do any of that. There will be no horn-tooting, no


specific calls to action. Instead, I want to encourage you to stop and take a look around this beautiful, rural place we all call home and acknowledge the blessings that you have enjoyed over the past year.

'Tis the season of sacred days; days to celebrate the company of others; days to pray, once again, for peace on earth; days to give thanks for all that we still enjoy in this great country; days to appreciate why life is always worth living.

I hope you'll take the time to truly experience another glorious holiday season, one filled with Christmas carols and candlelit church services and home-made cookies. I hope you'll cherish what you have, yet always remember to extend a hand to those less fortunate.

That's what I plan to do this year.

Author Melody Beattie once wrote, *"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."*

May love, joy, peace and hope be yours this holiday season and always. 

Use tax credits to fund efficiency upgrades

BY MEGAN MCKOY

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

The idea of living in a more efficient home — and paying lower utility bills — has developed widespread appeal. But finding ways to fund improvements can be difficult during these hard economic times.

Fortunately, the federal government offers two ways to recover some of your expenses when planning upgrades: energy efficiency tax credits and renewable energy tax credits.

Through the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act — known as the federal stimulus bill — Uncle Sam offers a personal tax credit of up to \$1,500 for energy efficiency measures made at existing homes in 2009 and 2010. You can recover 30 percent of the cost of adding insulation materials and exterior doors, windows and roofs designed to help reduce your home's heat loss or gain. The

credit also covers efficient central air conditioners, air-source heat pumps, hot water boilers and biomass stoves.


With a maximum value of \$1,500 for all improvements made in 2009 and 2010, the credit may be applied toward material costs on all projects. You can also use it on installation costs for heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, and biomass stoves.

If you want to start generating your own power, consider taking a renewable energy tax credit covering 30 percent of the cost of materials and installation for solar panels, solar water heaters and geothermal heat pumps. This credit applies to both existing homes and new construction. Projects must be placed into service between January 1, 2009, and December 31, 2016.

Energy Star, a joint program of the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, provides guidelines on what qualifies for

both tax credits at www.energystar.gov, keyword "Tax credits."

You can file for energy tax credits using *IRS Form 5695*. Remember to get a Manufacturer Certification Statement (a signed statement from the manufacturer certifying that the product or component qualifies for the tax credit) for your records. Both of the energy tax credits are non-refundable — they can increase your refund by reducing the taxes you owe, dollar for dollar, and can be carried forward to reduce your taxes in following years. But you don't get a separate check for the credit amount.

In addition, consumers in Pennsylvania who want to make their homes more efficient may be eligible for further subsidies or rebates. For a listing of state and local energy efficiency assistance available, visit the Database for State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency at www.dsireusa.org. 



Making Sense out of Federal Stimulus Energy Efficiency Tax Credits

The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides incentives for you to make energy efficiency improvements to your existing home in 2009 and 2010. Receive a tax credit for 30 percent of the cost of materials for qualifying improvements—up to \$1,500 over both years. The cost of installation is not covered for windows, doors, roofing and insulation. A list of qualified improvements is at www.energystar.gov, keyword 'tax credits.' Examples include:

Windows and Doors

Exterior Windows, Doors and Skylights Must have Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (SHGC) and U-factor less than or equal to 0.30.

Storm Windows and Doors When combined with the window/door over which it's installed, it must meet the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) in your climate zone.

Roofing

Metal, Asphalt Roofs All ENERGY STAR metal and asphalt roofs qualify. Must be expected to last 5 years or have a 2 year warranty.

Insulation

Insulation Primary purpose must be to insulate. For example, vapor retarders are covered but insulated siding does not qualify. Also must meet 2009 IECC and be expected to last 5 years or have a 2 year warranty.

Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

Central Air Conditioning For split systems, must have an energy efficiency ratio (EER) greater than or equal to 13 and a Seasonal EER greater than or equal to 16. For package systems, must have an EER greater than or equal to 12 and a SEER greater than or equal to 14.

Air-Source Heat Pumps For split systems, must have a Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) greater than or equal to 8.5, an EER greater than or equal to 12.5, and a SEER greater than or equal to 15. For package systems, must have a HSPF greater than or equal to 8, an EER greater than or equal to 12, and a SEER greater than or equal to 14.

Natural Gas or Propane Furnace Must have an Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency (AFUE) greater than or equal to 95.

Gas, Propane, or Oil Hot Water Boiler and Oil Furnace Must have an AFUE greater than or equal to 90.

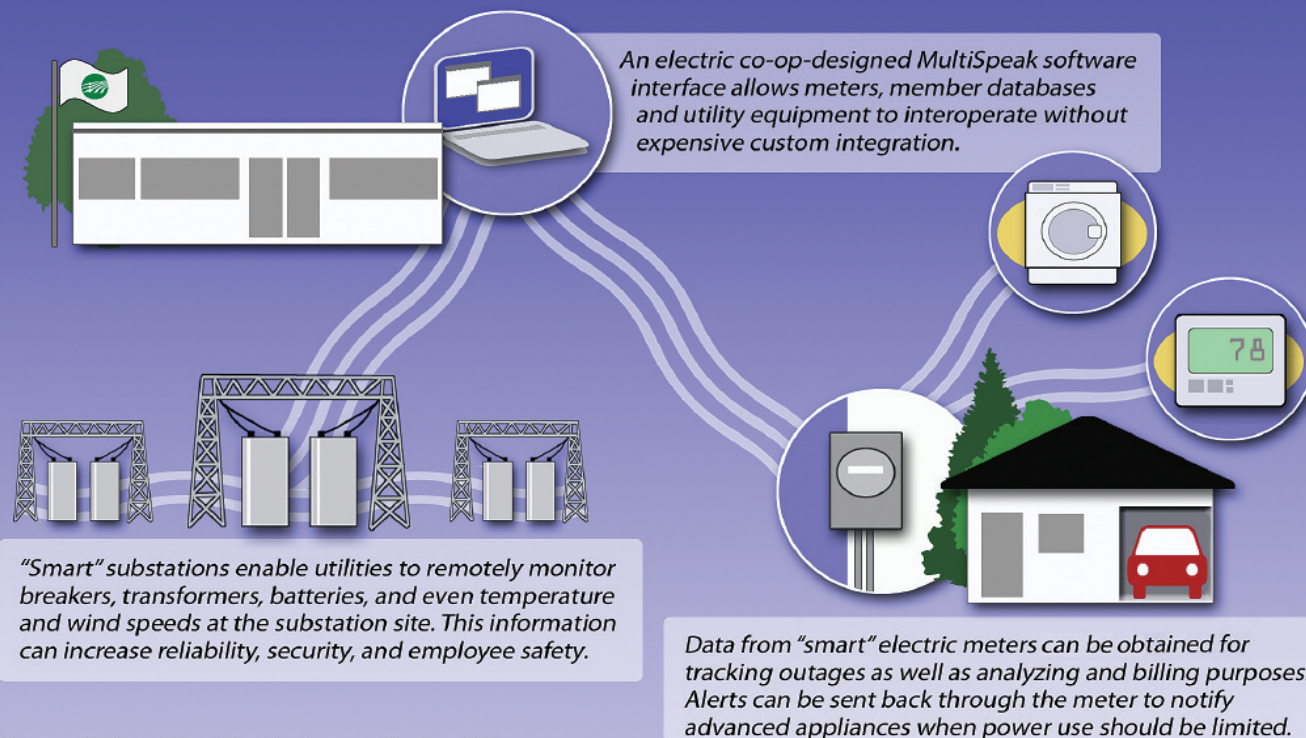
Advanced Main Air Circulating Fan No more than 2 percent of furnace total energy use.

NOTE: Select non-solar water heaters and biomass stoves also qualify for energy efficiency tax credits. Tax credits are also available for renewable energy, including geothermal heat pumps. For tax purposes, the Manufacturer's Certification Statement and receipt are generally required.

Source: ENERGY STAR. For details visit www.energystar.gov.

The Smart Grid

By enabling both new and existing electric grid components to communicate with each other, electric utilities can better monitor conditions, collect information, and remotely control devices over a distribution network. Often called the *Smart Grid*, this system can utilize various technologies, as shown here.



Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Efficient holiday gift-giving ideas

BY SUSAN R. PENNING
Director of Member Services

Did you know that, each holiday season, Americans throw away 25 percent more trash than at any other time of the year? This amounts to about 1 million extra tons of garbage per week. Just the 2.65 billion holiday cards sold each year in this country could fill a football field 10 stories high. If we each sent one less card, we'd save 50,000 cubic yards of paper.

As you browse for presents this year, consider a gift that will save the giver and the recipient energy as well as help the environment.

For starters, why not do the bulk of

your shopping locally or online? You would eliminate pollution from extensive travel and boost your family's safety by avoiding holiday traffic.

Consider shopping at companies that support the environment. Look for gifts made with natural components, such as grown cotton or hemp. In addition, look for products that can be recycled or have been made with recycled materials.

Look for appliances and electronics that tout the Energy Star label, ensuring they are the most energy-efficient models available. For that handyman or handywoman on your list, consider power tools with Energy Star battery chargers.

Warm slippers and afghans are smart gifts for those who want to lower heating bills this winter.

Looking for that last stocking

stuffer for the kids? Remember there's nothing wrong with gifts powered by the imagination rather than by batteries or electricity.

When it comes to gift wrapping, you can make environmentally conscious decisions as well. If we all wrapped just three gifts with re-used materials, we would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields. Wrapping paper made from recycled paper is also available. Or you could employ your creative skills by using old posters, newspapers or fabric.

Give your family the extra gift of your time. While energy-efficient products and technologies do the work for you, taking a moment to evaluate how you can reduce home energy bills and needless air pollution will benefit your family long after the holiday decorations are put away.

(mini) Home Energy Audit

Clip this list and check each area of your home to see if you're using energy efficiently. Every nook and cranny holds potential inefficiencies, so it pays to be thorough! Visit www.energysavers.gov for more information on what's listed below.



INSULATION and DUCTWORK



Attic

- Insulation spread evenly
- Insulation in good condition
- Attic vents are unblocked by insulation
- Attic access doors properly insulated and sealed

R-Value indicates an insulation's resistance to heat flow (the higher the better). Insulation should meet R-values recommended for your specific climate.

Walls and floors

- Minimum R-value of 19 for perimeter walls
- Minimum R-value of 25 for under-floor insulation

Basement

- Ductwork insulated and sealed
- Hot water pipes insulated
- Water heater insulated, if in unconditioned space

HEATING and COOLING



- Air supply vents are unblocked by furniture or curtains
- Return air registers are unblocked by furniture
- Return air handler filters are clean
- HVAC system has had annual maintenance check-up
- Programmable thermostat installed and programmed

AIR INFILTRATION



Windows and Doors

- Windows close and lock properly
- Window gaskets in good condition
- Window trim sealed and painted
- Doors properly weather stripped
- Doors close and latch properly

Exterior Penetrations

Plumbing and wire openings sealed:

- Kitchen cabinets
- Bathroom cabinets
- Utility room

- Fireplace damper sealed tightly

APPLIANCES and LIGHTING



- Refrigerator condenser coils clean
- Refrigerator door gasket tight
- Unused refrigerators and freezers unplugged
- Water heater set to 120 degrees or below
- Dishwasher energy-saving feature turned on
- Washing machine loads run with cold water when possible



Well Pump

- Operating properly
- Good pressure
- No leaks

Lighting

- Compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) used
- Outdoor lighting automatically triggered by motion or dark

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association



PHOTO BY POLLY MCMULLIN

Open house hosted at Huntingdon district office

Mapping Assistant Matt Andrasi (far right) demonstrates the co-op's new digital mapping system during an open house Oct. 23 at the Huntingdon district office's new location at the intersection of Fairgrounds and Station roads south of Huntingdon.

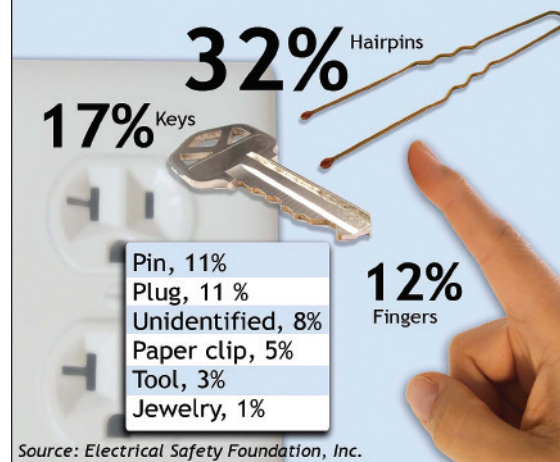
All co-op members served by Valley Rural Electric's Huntingdon district were invited to attend the open house, which was held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event featured energy-related displays, complimentary tours, refreshments, giveaways and a door prize drawing for a basket of energy-efficient products.

Clair Grove (hand raised) won the door prize.

The Huntingdon district was previously located on Standing Stone Road north of Huntingdon. The facility there is for sale.

Objects Commonly Placed in Electrical Outlets

Every year 2,400 children are injured after inserting household objects into electrical outlets. These are the most common objects placed in outlets:



Source: Electrical Safety Foundation, Inc.