



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

West Central Electric News

April 2012



West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. ~ Serving our members' needs since 1939

Save some green during Missouri's sales tax holiday

If this is your year to buy a new refrigerator, air conditioner or other major appliance, then you should know about the 2012 Show-Me Green Sales Tax Holiday April 19-25.

The holiday exempts state sales tax on qualifying ENERGY STAR-qualified

new appliances, up to \$1,500 per appliance, during a seven-day period beginning at 12:01 a.m. April 19 and ending at midnight April 25. Some cities, counties and districts also may exempt local sales taxes.

Qualifying appliances are:

- Clothes washers
- Water heaters
- Dishwashers
- Air conditioners
- Furnaces
- Refrigerators
- Freezers

Equipment may also be eligible for rebates through West Central Electric Cooperative. Check current qualifications at www.westcentralelectric.coop, or contact the cooperative's rebate department at 800-491-3803 or 660-584-2131.

Pay what you want, when you want!

New payment options let members choose due date and more

Your electric cooperatives wants to make paying your bill as convenient and easy as possible. That's why we have added TWO NEW PAYMENT OPTIONS to the already numerous choices you have when it comes to making your electric payment.

CYCLE BILLING: Members may choose their due date. You may either stay with the 15th of the month, or move your due date to the 1st, 8th or 22nd of the month. Bills will still be calculated and mailed approximately two weeks prior to the selected due date, with late fees being assessed after the due date has passed. **CYCLE BILLING IS SLATED TO BEGIN JUNE 1, 2012.**

PRE-PAID BILLING: Pay your bill WHEN YOU HAVE THE MONEY. Members may deposit money into their electric accounts once, twice, as many times during the month as you like. We will notify you when your account is getting low. **THE PRE-PAID BILLING PROGRAM WILL BEGIN LATE SPRING 2012.** Watch your newsletter, the cooperative's facebook page at www.facebook.com/WestCentralElectric, and the WCE website: westcentralelectric.coop for details.

New payment options join an array of choices you already have:

BY MAIL: Members may mail in checks or credit card payments using the billing slip at the bottom of the monthly bill.

IN PERSON: Payments may be made in either of WCE's two office locations -- in Higginsville at 7867 S. Highway 13, or in Oak Grove at 506 N. Broadway. Drop boxes are available at both locations for payments after hours or on the weekends.

Members may also drop payments at First Central Bank, 1310 S. Maguire in Warrensburg. The bank lobby and drive-through are available during normal banking hours for accepting payments, and members may also use the bank's night depository located in the drive-through area. (This is NOT a marked West Central Electric drop box) Billing slips **MUST** be included with payments.

Members in the Holden area may drop payments at F&C Bank on Highway 58 in Holden.

ONLINE: Online payment options are available for members to pay by check, credit or debit card. Visit our website at www.westcentralelectric.coop.

BY PHONE: Members may call payments in to the Higginsville and Oak Grove offices to pay by check, debit or credit card.

AUTO PAY: Another option available to members is to have their account set up to be automatically withdrawn from a bank account, or charged to a credit card each month.

Bankdraft payments are withdrawn from the account on the 15th of each month (or the next working day if the 15th falls on a weekend). Credit cards are charged the same way.

Members opting to participate in the auto pay program will continue to receive a bill each month, however, it will state either "BANKDRAFT -- DO



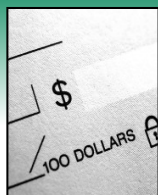
NEW BILLING OPTIONS...WCE Office Associate Anne Patrick (left) describes the new payment options to cooperative member Kayla Anthony of Odessa. Two new billing programs will debut this year, allowing members to choose their own due date and to pre-pay for their electricity by depositing money into their account whenever they wish.

NOT PAY" or "CREDIT CARD -- DO NOT PAY."

To sign up for CYCLE BILLING, PRE-PAID BILLING, or AUTO BANKDRAFT, contact the cooperative

at 800-491-3803.

To sign up for AUTO-PAY BY CREDIT CARD, return your billing slip with your information and mark the "EVERY MONTH" box.



West Central Electric allocates capital credits for those purchasing electricity in 2011...page 2



New residential electric rates take effect April 1... page 2



Buying an energy-smart appliance really DOES matter. Here's why...page 3

Headquarters:
7867 S. Highway 13, P.O. Box 452
Higginsville, MO 64037
1-660-584-2131 or 1-800-491-3803

District office:
506 N. Broadway
Oak Grove, MO 64075
1-816-625-8211

Website:
www.WestCentralElectric.coop

24-Hour Number:
1-800-491-3803

General Manager:
Mike Gray

Board of Directors:
Clark Bredehoeft, President
Ron Steelman, Vice-Pres.
Paul Nolte, Treasurer
Robert Simmons, Secretary
Stan Rhodes, Asst. Sect.
Dale Jarman, Director
Max Swisegood, Director
Densil Allen, Director
Richard Strobel, Director

Reminder to members: New rates take effect April 1

West Central Electric's new rate schedule will take effect April 1, and will be reflected on bills due by May 15.

The overall increase amounts to 7 percent. The new residential rate will see charges for the first 800 kWh set at \$0.0951 and over 800 kWh at a reduced rate of \$0.0712. The service availability charge will remain at \$25.

The monthly rental fee for dusk-to-dawn lights will increase to \$9.20. For that fee, West Central Electric will install a dusk-to-dawn light on our existing meter or transformer pole. Maintenance and energy costs of the light are included in the rental fee.

WCE Rate Schedule (Effective with bill due by May 15, 2012)

Residential
Service Availability @ \$25.00
First 800 kWh @ \$0.0951
Excess kWh @ \$0.0712

Commercial and large-industrial rates available upon request

West Central allocates capital credits for 2011

West Central Electric Cooperative's margins have been allocated to each member/owner who purchased electric energy in 2011, according to General Manager Mike Gray.

Because rural electric cooperatives' business structure differs from investor-owned utility companies, the money WCE makes as margins (profits) is returned to the member/owners who use the service, rather than to unknown investors. The money is used as equity in the cooperative, and is returned to the members over time as determined by your board of directors.

West Central Electric tries to balance the system by staying financially strong while also returning the profits to its members over time. Each year, the board of directors decides how this will be accomplished.

You can calculate your own allocation for the year by using the formula in the box below.

The percentage used in the formula was determined by the total margins (profits) of the cooperative, and the total cost paid for our wholesale power in 2011. This year, your allocated amount for 2011 appeared on the electric bill you received the first part of March 2012.

If you have a non-rural/residential account, any questions regarding how to calculate your allocation, or if you do not know your year-to-date patronage, contact Sandy Starke at the Higginsville office at 660-584-2131 or 1-800-491-3803.

Total paid for electricity in 2011
(Beginning with the amount due Feb. 15, 2010,
and ending with the amount due Jan. 15, 2011.)

0.06301824814

2011 allocation
(Applies to rural/residential rate only.)

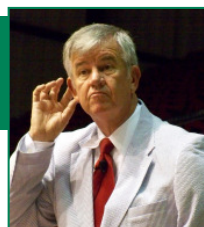
Example:

\$1,000 total billing for 2011

\$1,000
X
0.06301824814 =
\$63.02
2011 allocation

Doug Rye Says...

The truth about heat pumps...



There is a great deal of misunderstanding about heat pumps. I know this for a fact because I regularly receive calls about heat pumps. Those calls are either about comfort or high utility bills. Write this down: A properly sized and properly installed heat pump system, including ductwork, will provide total affordable comfort.

I have performed energy analyses on hundreds of house plans and have recommended that heat pumps be used for every single one of them. I have not recommended a gas furnace for a new house in more than 20 years. And, to the best of my knowledge, I do not have a single dissatisfied customer.

My mother would say that the proof is in the pudding. And yes, before you even ask, many of them are in northern states. So why would some folks be unhappy with their heat pumps?

There are two types of heat pumps: 1) The air-to-air heat pump that has an outdoor unit and 2) the water-to-air geothermal heat pump that has no outdoor unit. While both types are excellent systems, the geothermal is my No. 1 choice for most houses.

Be aware that a heat pump is special only in the heating mode. In the cooling mode, it is just electric cooling like other air conditioning units. It is special in the heating mode because it provides heat at a high efficiency.

An air-to-air heat pump uses one unit of electricity but gives 2.5 units of heat. That's why we say that it is 250-percent efficient. A geothermal system can provide heat at 400-percent efficiency.

Most gas furnaces are rated at 80-per-

cent efficiency. I always ask you folks if you want 80-percent or 400-percent efficiency. It's your choice. It's none of my business. But my wife and I chose 400 percent more than 18 years ago and she will tell you that I am careful with our money.

In either case, a heat pump can nearly always provide heat for less money than a gas furnace. Well, if this is true, why would anyone choose not to use a heat pump? It is very simple. It is called "Horror Stories of the Past." In the last 30 years, I have heard them all. Let me see if I can teach this two-week course in two paragraphs.

1. If the ductwork design and installation are correct, the air-to-air heat pump can provide air that is about 20 degrees warmer than the room temperature. If cool 67-degree air goes into the heat pump, 87-degree air will come out. If a room is 87 degrees, it would be plenty warm; but 87-degree air blowing across your skin feels cool. Blow real hard on your hand. That is about 93-degree air, but even that feels cool. However, if you could blow enough 93-degree air into the room, the room would soon be too hot to enjoy. So 93-degree air is hot but it can feel cool if it is quickly moved across your skin. Now, let's simply turn the thermostat up to 73 degrees. Now it is 73-degree air into the heat pump and 93-degree air into the room. Now say "aaahhh" very slowly on your hand. Wow, it is nice and warm. The supply air temperature supplied by a geothermal heat pump will be about 30 degrees warmer than the air going into the unit. If the thermostat is set on 73

degrees, the air going into the room will be about 103 degrees. Well hot diggity dog. That's even better . . . and cheaper too.

2. You are already thinking that it will cost you more if you turn the thermostat to a higher setting and you are right. But it probably isn't nearly as much as you might think. It is estimated by some that it will cost about 2.5 percent more for each degree that you raise the thermostat setting. Let's just say that it takes \$75 average per month to heat a particular house. If you raise the thermostat from 68 degrees to 73 degrees, which is cool to warm, you might increase the heating cost by \$9.38 per month. For the cost of a pizza, you can now be warm and comfortable for the whole month. Remember, if you turn the thermostat up 3 degrees or more at once, the heat strips may come on and the utility bill will be higher.

By next month you will have totally forgotten about winter but you will have the same concerns about comfort and utility bills. Therefore, I know that you will jump for joy to know that I have one more article to write on this subject and it will include cooling. See you in May.

Listen to Doug Rye's
"Home Remedies" show
Saturday mornings from
9 a.m. to 10 a.m. on KKKX
Radio, 105.7 FM.

Spring has sprung, that means it's time to think safety

There's no musical talent required to tune up for spring electrical safety. Just use your common sense and follow a few guidelines to enjoy the spring season safely.

- ◆When you use electrical appliances and tools outdoors, make sure they are properly grounded and that your work area is dry.

- ◆Make sure outdoor outlets each has its own waterproof cover.

- ◆Remind your children never to climb utility poles or play near substations, pad-mounted transformers (you know, those "big green boxes,") or any fence, building or equipment marked "Danger: High Voltage."

- ◆Don't post or attach signs or flyers to utility poles. They create a safety hazard for our linemen who may need to climb the pole for routine maintenance or repairs.

- ◆When power lines are nearby, use fiberglass ladders, not metal.

- ◆Fly kites with dry string only. Never

fly kites or model airplanes near power lines. If a kite gets caught in a power line, drop the string immediately and call us.

- ◆When planting trees or installing a fence, make sure to call before you dig at 1-800-DIG RITE.

Make it a safe spring!



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE...
WCE General Manager Mike Gray (left) recognizes employee Tim Bowler (center) and director Dale Jarman for their years of service to the Cooperative. Bowler, the IT manager, has been with WCE for 10 years. Jarman has served on the cooperative's board of directors for 15 years.

Shop energy smart on appliances

A refrigerator is not just a refrigerator, and that's true of all appliances. Some are more efficient than others, and that's a factor to consider when appliance shopping. Here's some advice on buying your next major appliance:

- 1. Consider more than the purchase price --** It may be tempting to go for the lowest price, but buying the cheapest refrigerator may cost you more in the long run because the cheaper model may cost twice as much to operate and may require more repairs. Look for the yellow EnergyGuide label on the back of the appliance or for the Energy Star label if the appliance qualifies for that rating. The difference in a model using 600 kilowatt-hours versus one using 800 kWh can add up to a lot of extra cost over the lifetime of the appliance. Refrigerators last about 12 years, clothes washers about 11, dishwashers about 10 and room air conditioners about 9.

- 2. Compare the energy use of competing models --** A model's motor, compressor, pump, valve, gaskets, seals and electronic sensors all contribute to its efficiency. You can calculate the electrical use of appliances at www.energysavers.gov

or use the energy estimates on the EnergyGuide labels. These labels also show capacity, energy-efficiency ratings and the Energy Star logo if the model meets those qualifications.

- 3. Select the right size and style --** Measure the space the appliance will occupy before you buy. Will doors and lids open fully? Is there enough clearance for ventilation?

- 4. Know where to shop --** online, outlets, catalogs, electronics stores, big box stores, etc.

- 5. Compare the performance of the models you're considering --** repair history, water use, energy efficiency, noise level, etc.

- 6. Ask about special energy-efficiency offers --** through the dealer, local store, your cooperative or even the government. For example, the Show-Me Green Sales Tax Holiday April 19-25 is an opportunity to save.

Finally, check out the U.S. Department of Energy's appliance shopping guide at www.energysavers.gov/tips/shopping_guide.cfm.

Does an efficient appliance really matter?

You bet. Here's why:

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, appliances account for about 13 percent of your home's energy consumption.

Energy-efficient appliances typically last longer — motors don't work as hard, so the working life is extended.

You may qualify for a rebate from your cooperative — that's dollars in your pocket.

What to look for in washers and refrigerators

Dishwashers — Look for an Energy Star model, which will use 5.8 gallons of water per cycle or less than models purchased before 1994. The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy recommends you buy a dishwasher that uses less than 340 kilowatt-hours of electricity annually. Also look for low-water use, wash-cycle options and a "no-heat" drying feature.

Clothes washers — Download the list of qualifying Energy Star washers from www.energystar.gov. Look for the highest Modified Energy Factor rating, which accounts for water-heating energy, and the lowest Water Factor, which indicates the number of gallons of water needed for each cubic foot of laundry.

In general, front-loading models are much more efficient than top loaders. Also, choose a washer that has plenty of wash-and-rinse cycles and faster spin speeds, which can improve efficiency as well.

Refrigerators — An Energy Star model will use at least 20 percent less energy than required by federal standards and 40 percent less energy than conventional models sold in 2001. Ice makers and water dispensers, while convenient, use more energy. Top-mounted freezer configurations can be up to 30 percent more efficient than side-by-side. A model under 25 cubic feet should meet most household needs.

Improve your air conditioner's efficiency

Regular tune-ups can save money, extend unit's life

Air conditioners use a lot of electricity, consuming the most in a summer-time heat wave. Without regular service to your air conditioner, its efficiency can fall by as much as half, especially when it works overtime in the summer heat. However, proper maintenance and repair on your air conditioner will save you money and can extend its life for roughly 15 years.

Air conditioners are complicated and require specialized tools to service them. It is best to hire an air-conditioning technician. An annual tune-up of your air conditioner averages approximately \$50 to \$100, but can reduce your cooling costs by 5 percent or more.

Here are some maintenance tips that should be performed by a professional:

- Inspect the ductwork for loose joints and other leaks. Air leaks waste energy and should be sealed with duct mastic, not duct tape.
- Check hose connections for leaks, and make sure the condensation tube is draining freely.
- Clean the blower so that it can move air more efficiently.
- Oil the motors, and check the belts for tightness and wear.
- Verify the airflow by measurement. Improper airflow can affect efficiency.
- Clean the indoor evaporator and outdoor condenser coil. If it doesn't have an



REGULAR INSPECTIONS SAVE...Regular maintenance like inspecting ductwork, checking for leaks and cleaning the indoor evaporator and outdoor condenser coil can ensure your air conditioner is in tip-top shape and running efficiently. Inspections should always be performed by a professional heating and cooling contractor.

access panel, have one installed.

- Check the refrigerant charge and adjust if needed. Remember that the law requires refrigerant to be recaptured when units are recharged.
- Straighten any bent fins on the condenser and evaporator coils.

• Inspect the electric terminals.

- Make sure to clean and tighten the connections.
- Inspect the thermostat to ensure that it provides a reliable reading.
- Install a programmable thermostat to adjust your home's temperature auto-

matically. This thermostat increases the temperature setting while you're gone and then returns the home to a more comfortable setting before you return.

Source: North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives and NRECA.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

WCE brush contractors with Asplundh will be working in the following areas throughout the month of April.

Columbus Substation

(south and southwest of Odessa and southeast of Bates City)

Fayetteville Substation

(within a 10-mile radius of the ratetrack north of Warrensburg)

Odessa Substation

(north of I-70 from Odessa to the Missouri River)

Questions may be directed to the Right-of-Way Coordinator at 660-584-2131 or 800-491-3803.

A reminder that contractors with Lee Inspection Co. continue pole inspections in the following locations:

Concordia Substation

(east of Higginsville and areas surrounding the city of Concordia)

Rose Hill Substation

(areas south of Holden)

Inspectors will have vehicle decals and photo badges identifying them as contractors for West Central Electric Cooperative. Questions may be directed to the Operations Dpt. at 660-584-2131 or 800-491-3803.

Spring planting? Don't forget these important safety requirements for planting trees & shrubs near power lines!

