

WATT'S HAPPENING

SCENIC RIVERS ENERGY COOPERATIVE
LANCASTER, DARLINGTON AND GAYS MILLS, WISCONSIN

Three DIY Efficiency Projects to Tackle This Year

A New Year brings new opportunities to save energy--and money. You may think energy efficiency upgrades require a great deal of time and expense, but that's not always the case.

If you're interested in making your home more efficient but don't want to break the bank, there are several DIY projects you can tackle to increase energy savings. Let's take a look at three inexpensive efficiency upgrades that can help you save energy throughout the year.

Trim Dryer Vent

Level of difficulty: easy. Supplies needed: tin snips, gloves, measuring tape and masking tape. Estimated Cost: about \$25 depending on the supplies you already have.

If your dryer vent hose is too long, your dryer is working harder than it has to, using more energy than necessary. The vent hose should be long enough for you to pull the dryer out a couple feet from the wall, but the shape of the hose should form a line--it should not have a lot of slack, with twists and curves. A shorter, unobstructed vent hose increases the efficiency of your dryer, dries clothing faster and reduces lint buildup, which can create potential fire hazards.

Simply measure, mark and trim the hose to the desired length, then reattach the hose to your dryer and exterior vent. If you're unsure about the hose length, check out YouTube.com for a quick video tutorial.



Make the most of your clothes dryer by ensuring an appropriate vent hose length. A shorter, unobstructed vent hose increases the efficiency of your dryer, dries clothing faster and reduces lint buildup, which can create potential fire hazards.

Seal Air Leaks

Level of difficulty: moderate. Supplies needed: caulk and caulk gun, weather stripping, gloves, putty knife, paper towels. Estimated Cost: \$25 to \$50 depending on the materials you purchase.

Sealing air leaks in your home can help you save 10% to 20% on heating and cooling bills. Apply caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring and plumbing to seal in conditioned air. You should also weather strip exterior doors, which can keep out drafts and help you control energy costs. Types of caulking and weather stripping materials vary, but ask your local hardware or home store for assistance if you're unsure about the supplies you need.

For more information, the Department of Energy provides step-by-step instructions for caulking and weather stripping: <https://bit.ly/2Kesu6W>

Insulate Attic Stairs Opening

Level of difficulty: moderate. Supplies needed (if you build the box yourself): rigid foam board, faced blanket insulation, tape for foam board, measuring tape, utility knife, caulk and caulk gun, plywood. Estimated Cost: \$50 to \$100.

A properly insulated attic is one of the best ways to optimize energy savings and comfort in your home, but many homeowners don't consider

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Understanding Portable Electric Heaters - (Separating Advertising Claims from Fact)

A number of portable and hard-wired electric heaters are available today in response to high home heating costs. Don't be misled by cleverly worded ads that suggest one heater may be more efficient than another. All electric heaters, except ultra-high-efficiency heat pumps, provide 100 percent efficiency, and watt for watt, cost the same to operate.

Describing Three Main Heater Designs

The first step is to understand the three main heater categories. The first category is the "High-Temperature Radiant" style. They are characterized by the glowing red heating elements, and shiny mirrored reflector behind the coils. Radiant heaters don't attempt to heat the air, but rely on "beaming" their warmth directly to people or objects in the room. Just like the sun's warmth, it can be a very pleasing form of heat.

The second category is the "Natural Convection" style, which transfers heat differently. Instead of using red-hot coils, they distribute the same amount of heat over a wider surface of the heater. This allows the flow of air over their surface (natural convection) to transfer heat to the air. Often seen in a long slender baseboard design, these heaters are warm to the touch but not hot enough to burn you. One example of a natural convection heater is shown in the adjacent photo. Other convective heaters are shaped like old-fashioned cast iron radiators, as found in historic buildings. An oil-like fluid inside spreads the heat around the full surface of these portable heaters. On a watt-for-watt equivalent,

natural convection heaters put out just as much warmth, but you don't feel the intense heat as from a radiant design.

The third category, "Fan-Forced Heaters" rely on a blower to push air over the heating coils. Designed like a "mini furnace", these heaters must warm the air in the room to increase comfort. Unlike the natural convection

style, they don't rely on a large surface area to transfer their heat to the air. That is why fan-forced heaters are often smaller in size than the other designs. A quick clarification - small fans are sometimes used in radiant heaters too, as a way to circulate the air. Don't let the presence of this small fan fool you; if most of the heat radiates out from visible glowing coils, it's a radiant heater.

A Watt Is a Watt, No Matter How It is Delivered

Each of the three designs described above use a process called "electric resistance heating". Because all electric heaters use this same process, they all have the same efficiency -100 percent. There are no losses. Whatever the heater's shape, size, or marketing claims, the amount of heat coming out is the same as the amount of electricity going in. Therefore, any two heaters with a rating of 1,500 watts on the nameplate will deliver the same amount of heat, no matter what they look like. To calculate the hourly cost of operating an electric heater, consider the following:

$$A \text{ (Amps)} \times V \text{ (Volts)} = W \text{ (watts)}$$

$$W \text{ (watts)} / 1,000 \times (\text{hours of use/day}) \times (\text{number of days used}) \times (\text{electric rate})$$

Example using 12.5 amp space heater

$$12.5 \text{ amps} \times 120 \text{ volts} = 1,500 \text{ watts}$$

$$1,500 \text{ watts} / 1,000 \times 4 \text{ hours per day} \times 30 \text{ days} \times .1070 / \text{kwh} = \$19.26 / \text{month}$$

What is different is the method used to transfer the warmth from the heating elements to the person or objects that need it. Any of the three portable electric heater types can allow room-by-room variation in temperature. This "zonal heating method" can save energy, but only by lowering the setting on the home's central heating thermostat. Then, in the occupied room(s), a space heater is used to boost the temperature to a comfortable level.

The success of this strategy is somewhat dependent on the home's floor plan. For a home having a very open floor plan (few dividing walls), it's difficult to close-off unoccupied rooms. The key to this zonal heating method is to be able to lower the temperature in a large percentage of the house, for most of the day.

Source: National Food and Energy Council; Richard Hiatt, author ■

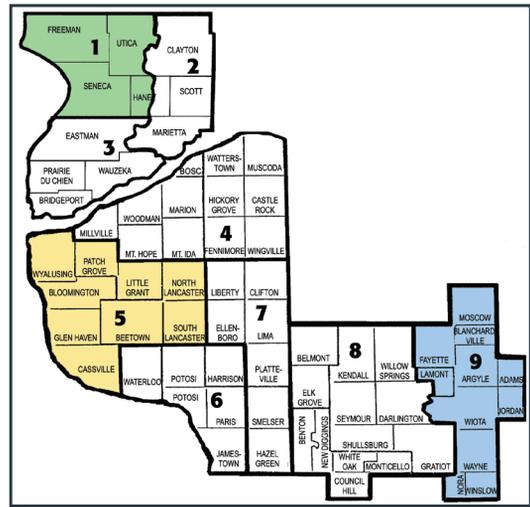


Director Candidate Paperwork Due

If you reside in Districts, 1, 5, or 9 and you are interested in running for a seat on the SREC Board of Directors, you must act quickly. The deadline for turning in the necessary paperwork is Friday, January 4.

Potential candidates must gather a minimum of 15 signatures on the petition form in order to become eligible to run for a position on the board. Petitions must be signed by 15 members who reside in the district in which the nominee resides. In the case of a joint membership, the signature of one of both joint members counts as one (1) signature per the Bylaws. The nominee must receive service from the cooperative, at the address in the district they are interested in representing. As provided by the Bylaws, directors receive a per diem for attendance at monthly board meetings. The current per diem is \$500 per meeting.*

Completed petitions must be received at the SREC office in Lancaster no later than January 4, 2020.



Our 2020 Annual Meeting and election will be held on Saturday, April 4 at the Grant County Youth & Ag Building in Lancaster. Current incumbents, Marcus Saegrove, Delbert Reuter and Jack Larson, respectively are all seeking re-election. Petition forms are available on our web-site or at our offices.

For additional information about the petition process or qualifications for directors, please refer to the Bylaws, the sample petition form, and the director district map which are available on the cooperative's website at www.sre.coop. Please feel free to contact us at 800-236-2141 x554.

** This information was inadvertently omitted in the December Watt's Happening announcement. We apologize for the error.*

continued. . . Three DIY Efficiency Projects to Tackle This Year

insulating the attic stairs, or the opening to your attic space. Even a well-insulated attic can leak air through the stair opening, but luckily, there's an easy fix.

An insulated cover box can seal and insulate the attic stairs opening. You can build your own insulated cover box or purchase a pre-built box or kit from a local home improvement store like Home Depot or Lowe's for about \$60. If you decide to build your own, check out these step-by-step instructions from the Department of Energy: <https://bit.ly/36YNCYQ>. It should also be noted, if your attic opening is located in a garage that you do not heat and cool, this upgrade will not be as effective.

Saving energy doesn't have to be hard. With a little time and effort, you can maximize energy savings and increase the comfort of your home. ■

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Let the sunshine in! For additional warmth, open drapes over windows that receive sunlight during the day. Close them at night, which can reduce heat loss from a warm room up to 10%.

Source: energy.gov



Safe guidelines for use: Space heaters

Winter is coming, or so whispers the cold air making its way through your office and your home. To keep warm, you may be considering using a portable space heater at your desk or in particular rooms of your house. Before you plug it in, know that portable electric space heaters can present a “major safety hazard,” according to Electrical Safety Foundation International.



We urge our members to use space heaters safely and we recommend the following tips:

- Purchase space heaters that have been safety tested and UL approved. Read and follow the manufacturer’s instructions for operation and care.
- Before using a space heater, make sure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are in good working order.
- Place the heater out of high-traffic areas and on a level, hard, non-flammable floor.
- Remember to keep space heaters at least three feet from combustible liquids, like fuel, spray cans, and paint, and flammable items such as draperies, blankets, and sofas.
- Never allow pets or children near an electric heater. Accidental contact could cause serious shock or burns.
- Do not overload circuits. Never use extension cords or multiple plugs with a space heater and make sure not to plug the unit into the same circuit as other electric appliances.
- If your space heater is plugged into a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) and it trips, don’t assume there is something wrong with the GFCI. Immediately stop using the heater until a professional can check it - if not, a serious shock could occur.
- Never leave space heaters unattended. Turn off your space heater and unplug it before leaving the room or before going to bed.

Electric Blankets

Many people also use electric blankets to keep warm during cold winter nights, which can also be dangerous if the blankets aren’t used properly. Before plugging in electric blankets, check for any damage and inspect the cords for frays, cracks or cuts. Do not tuck electric blankets under the mattress, and place nothing on top of the blanket while it is in use, including comforters and bedspreads. Don’t allow pets to sleep on electric blankets. –

Source: energy.gov ■

Vegetation Management

Zielie’s Tree Service will finish up on the Gays Mills south circuit in Crawford County along Hwy 35, Kettle Hollow Road, Hobbs Hollow Road, and Maple Crest Road. When this area has been completed, the crews will start working on the east side of Hwy 27, County Road E, Taylor Ridge Road and a few other spots in this same area.

It is important for SREC to maintain its rights-of-way for the following reasons:

- Accessibility for field crews, vehicles and equipment
- Fire prevention
- Reliable electric service
- Quality service with the reduction of outages and blinks
- Safety for workers and the public
- Meeting state and federal code requirements

On a daily basis, SREC employees and contractors are working throughout the area, at times on your property, to operate and maintain the electric system and our rights-of-ways. We appreciate your cooperation. If you have questions, please contact Jay at jgardner@srec.net or call 800-236-2141 ext. 566.



Watt's Happening is published monthly as an information service to the member-owners of Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative.

Any questions or comments can be directed to *Watt's Happening*, Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative, 231 North Sheridan, Lancaster, WI 53813 or telephone (608) 723-2121 or toll free 800-236-2141.

www.sre.coop

Steve Lucas CEO

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