June 2020

WATT'S HAPPENING

SCENIC RIVERS ENERGY COOPERATIVE

LANCASTER, DARLINGTON AND GAYS MILLS, WISCONSIN

# Smart Thermostat Options - A Comparison of the Market's Smartest and Most Popular

Heating and cooling costs account for around half of a user's energy bill according to the U.S. Department of Energy. So when it comes to reducing energy use and cutting home energy costs, the most impact can be made by programming the thermostat. The right thermostat settings could yield energy savings of 8-15%, and new technology is making it easier than ever to achieve those settings.

Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and may be controlled remotely through a tablet, smartphone or voice control. Some models use multiple sensors to monitor temperatures in various parts of the home for more balanced heating or cooling, track user temperature preferences and use the data to optimize your heating and cooling schedule, and some are designed for complex multi-stage systems that will control heating, cooling, dehumidifier and ventilation systems.


*Smart thermostats, like the Ecobee model shown here, are Wi-Fi connected and can be controlled through your smartphone, tablet or voice. Photo Credit: Ecobee*

If you're interested in controlling your thermostat with your voice or an app, or in being hands-off and letting it learn your habits, you should consider a smart thermostat. To narrow your choices, factor in smart features, price and attributes that matter most to you, such as color, size or style, and make sure the chosen product supports your HVAC system.

The Nest 3rd Generation Learning Thermostat and Ecobee4 are the most popular and sophisticated devices in this category. Both devices are usually priced around $250, but consumers can easily recoup their money in energy cost savings. In fact, Focus on Energy can help you save money instantly or through a rebate on these devices. Visit them online for more information - focusonenergymarketplace.com.

There are many similarities between the two thermostats. Both can be adjusted via computer, tablet, smartphone, Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa device (the Ecobee4 even has a built-in Alexa-enabled speaker). And both thermostats can interact with other smart devices and utilize geofencing—using your phone's GPS to determine if you're home, then automatically adjusting the temperature. Nest's geofencing works with multiple phones, while Ecobee supports just one phone. Ecobee makes up for this with its more sophisticated sensors.

The Nest and Ecobee offer for purchase, remote sensors that allow the thermostat to take readings from any room throughout your home and adjust the temperature accordingly. This can be an advantage if your thermostat is located near a draft or in direct sunlight. The Ecobee's sensors go one step further with occupancy sensing, which notices if there is movement in the house, in order to override geofencing if the primary phone user leaves the house and someone is still there.

While many of the features are similar, there are a few that are notably different and can help you determine which is right for you.

Nest, powered by a rechargeable battery, is a learning thermostat and automatically learns your schedule. When you begin using Nest, it makes a few assumptions and creates a baseline for its schedule. As you adjust the temperature up or down, Nest records it, and after a week, learns your schedule and the temperature settings you prefer. From then, it continues to learn and respond to your adjustments. Nest also records 10 days of energy use data that shows you a visual of the times your system turned on and off during those

*continued. . .*

# **It can Add Up Fast -** Don't Let Higher Electric Bills Surprise You!

With almost everyone spending a lot more time at home lately, energy consumption will be on the rise. Usually when we're away from home, we shut the TV off, turn the thermostat to a lower temperature, and flip the lights off, but many of us are spending more time at home. This means that the traditional 40-hour workweek that is usually spent away from home is filled with more lights on, more devices running and maybe a few more trips to the fridge. Additionally, if there are children in your family, there may be multiple televisions and gaming consoles in use. All of this can add up rather quickly and we don't want you to be shocked.

Now, it may not be realistic to assume that some of these things will be running an extra 40 hours a week. Heaven help us all if our laundry and dishwashers are going 40 hours a week! But the point is that things add up quickly. Subscribe to our Facebook page, and keep watching our publications for energy saving tips all year long. ■

## Here are a few energy use calculations for an extra 40 hours of use per week:

| | Usage per hour | Cost for 40 hours/ week usage | Cost for 4 weeks of usage (160 hours) |
|---|---|---|---|
| PS4 Gaming | 130-150 watts | .58-.68 | 2.32-2.72 |
| PS4 Idle Menu | 90 watts | 0.40 | 1.60 |
| Incandescent light bulb | 60 watts | 0.26 | 1.04 |
| LED light bulb | 15 watts | 0.04 | 0.16 |
| Laptop | 20-100 watts | .08-.44 | .32-1.76 |
| Desktop Computer | 60-300 watts | .26-1.34 | 1.04-5.36 |
| Dishwasher | 1200-2400 watts | 5.38-10.76 | 21.52-43.04 |
| Microwave | 500-1800 watts | 2.24-8.06 | 8.96-32.24 |
| Washing Machine | 400-1300 watts | 1.80-5.82 | 7.20-23.28 |
| Clothes Dryer | 1800-5000 watts | 8.06-22.40 | 32.24-89.60 |
| Water Heater | 4,000 watts | 17.92 | 71.68 |
| 32" LED-Plasma TV | 55-160 watts | .24-.72 | .96-2.88 |
| 42" LED-Plasma TV | 80-220 watts | .36-.98 | 1.44-3.92 |
| 50" LED-Plasma TV | 100-300 watts | .44-1.34 | 1.76-5.36 |
| | | | |
| Total | | $38.06-71.16 | $152.24-284.64 |

**figures depend on the size and year of model/energy efficiency.*

# continued. . . **Smart Thermostat Options**

10 days. Nest also sends a monthly email report that includes a summary of your energy use compared to previous months and other Nest users.

Ecobee must be hardwire installed, utilizes a touchscreen and can analyze HVAC data for 18 months. All temperature and motion data from the thermostat and sensors is recorded, and can be accessed online by the owner to help you monitor total energy use, how the weather influences your use, and how your home efficiency compares to other users in your area.

The two thermostats also can connect with various energy devices in your home. Ecobee recognizes dehumidifiers and ventilators, and Nest recognizes heat pumps and auxiliary heat.

For those looking for a smart thermostat with fewer bells and whistles, the Honeywell Lyric T5+ is one of the market's most popular, priced around $135. While it can't sense your presence or learn your schedule, it does have the geofencing feature and can interact with other smart-home devices, such as turning on lights when you arrive or leave home.

Whichever fits your lifestyle and preferences, a smart thermostat is a good investment that can help you save energy and money in a more convenient way than ever. ■


*The Nest thermostat, powered by a rechargeable battery, is a learning thermostat and automatically learns your schedule. Photo Credit: Nest*

# 2020 WECA ESSAY CONTEST ANNOUNCED

Due to the cancellation of the Youth Leadership Congress (YLC), WECA is offering a unique scholarship opportunity, this year only. The scholarship, which is generally exclusive to those that attend YLC, is being extended to any high school or college freshman students whose primary residence is located in Wisconsin and who receives electric service from an electric cooperative. We strongly encourage our members to have their students enter the WECA Essay Contest.

Scholarships are awarded as follows to the authors of the top three essays:

**1st place – $1,000**
**2nd place – $500**
**3rd place – $250**

*Scholarships are paid to winning students upon presentation of proof of registration at any accredited college, university, or technical school in any state.*

## CONTEST RULES

**Choose one of the two questions below:**

- Electric cooperatives offer various opportunities to young people, such as scholarships, job shadowing, electrical safety programs and sponsorships. What are some innovative ways your electric cooperative can connect with young people, especially with children and teens?
- We've grown accustomed to having electricity on demand in the world we live in such as clicking a remote control to turn on a TV, using a computer, playing video games, or charging our cell phones. Describe the impact on your life and community in a world without electricity.

1. Students are encouraged to use personal experiences to demonstrate their understanding of the value of cooperation in their lives.
2. Knowledge of the subject, originality, grammar, spelling, and neatness will be factors used in judging essays.
3. A panel of three judges will judge essays. Only essays postmarked by the due date will be eligible to win.

4. Essays must be a minimum of 600 words and not more than 1,200 words (Approximately 2 to 4 typewritten pages).
5. Essays must be typed, double-spaced, and on white letter-sized paper. Essays will be copied for distribution to the judges, so please be sure your essay will copy clearly.
6. Students may win a WECA essay scholarship only once. If a student is awarded a scholarship the first year they enter, he or she may not enter the contest again.
7. Scholarships must be claimed within 2 years of receiving your notification of scholarship selection.
8. **DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE ESSAY.** Be sure to use an Essay Contest form. Visit www.weca.coop/weca-scholarships to find the Essay Contest Form and for more information.

**Essays must be mailed to:**

WECA Essay Contest
WECA
222 W. Washington Ave, Suite 680
Madison, WI 53703-2719

**ESSAYS MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN August 26, 2020**


*Visit our newly designed website*
*www.sre.coop*



# 2020 Member Photo Contest

**Photo Contest Criteria:**

- Photos must be taken within the Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative service area.
- Photos for 2021 should capture life in rural Wisconsin - specifically farm animals.
- Photos must have a horizontal (landscape) orientation.
- Photos can be in color or black and white.
- Photos must be high resolution; at least 300 dpi and 8”x10”.

# Vegetation Management

Zielies Tree Service will be trimming on the Soldiers Grove north circuit off of Trout Creek Road and north of Hwy 14/61 in Crawford County.

Badgerland Utility Solutions will start herbicide application on the Mt Hope Substation in Grant County.

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. During this time, we especially appreciate your cooperation as we maintain social distancing between our essential staff and our members. **If you have questions, please contact Jay at jgardner@srec.net or call 800-236-2141 ext. 566.**

**WATT'S HAPPENING**

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

Our board of directors consists of Chuck Simmons, Don Schaefer, Sandra Davidson, Ellen Conley, Jack Larson, Larry Butson, Delbert Reuter, Steve Carpenter and Marcus Saegrove.

*printed on recycled paper*

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.