

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

1511 14,000 Road, P.O. Box 368, Altamont, KS 67330
866-784-5500
www.twinvalleyelectric.coop

TWIN VALLEY ELECTRIC CO-OP
NEWS

TWIN VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Bryan Coover
President

Jason Zwahlen
Vice President

Bryan Hucke
Secretary

Heath Steeby
Treasurer

J J Bebb
Director

Zach Foster
Director

Jason Martin
Director

Diane McCartney
Director

Adam Smith
Director

STAFF
Angie Erickson
CEO

OFFICE HOURS
Monday-Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

CONTACT US
1511 14,000 Road
P.O. Box 368
Altamont, KS 67330
866-784-5500
www.twinvalleyelectric.coop

FROM THE CEO

Optimize Your HVAC System


Angie Erickson

As November settles in and temperatures begin to drop, your HVAC system will soon become one of the hardest-working appliances in your home. Before your system undergoes extra work this winter, now is a great time to ensure it is optimized and ready to go.

Start with something simple. One of the easiest and most effective measures you can take is checking filters. A clogged or dirty filter makes it harder for air to move through your system, which can make it run longer and work harder than necessary. Check filters regularly and replace them according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Vents matter too. Look around your home to make sure furniture, curtains, rugs and other household items aren't blocking any supply or return vents.

If you have a heat pump, your outdoor unit also deserves extra attention this time of year. Falling leaves, limbs and other debris can collect around the unit and restrict airflow. Clear any fallen vegetation near your unit and keep the area around your outdoor unit clear. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's cleaning recommendations. If you have a traditional central air conditioning system, your outdoor unit will likely remain idle during winter months, but it's still good practice to keep it clear of debris.

Don't overlook what you can't see. With forced-air systems, ductwork plays an essential role in delivering heated air throughout your home. Leaks, gaps, or disconnected sections can allow

Continued on page 12C ▶



A Recipe for Holiday Energy Savings

During the holiday season, you may spend more time cooking, baking and prepping for family and friends. A few small changes can help you save energy, lower utility costs and keep your kitchen running efficiently while still baking and cooking up a feast for family.

Saving energy in the kitchen starts with using the right appliance for the job, keeping equipment in good condition, and making simple changes to everyday cooking habits.

COOKING AND PREP

- Use small appliances when possible. Choose an air fryer, microwave, slow cooker, or toaster oven for small meals or side dishes. They often use less energy than a full-size oven.
- Keep the stovetop clean. Clean burners and surfaces help heat transfer evenly.
- Match the pan to the burner. Using a small pan on a large burner wastes heat. Choose a burner that closely matches the size of the pan.
- Cover pots and pans. Lids keep heat inside, help water boil faster, and allow food to cook evenly at lower settings.
- Keep the oven door closed. Use the oven light instead of opening the door to check on food. Opening the door lets heat escape and makes the oven work harder.
- Thaw frozen foods ahead of time. Move frozen foods to the refrigerator in advance to avoid microwave defrosting.
- Cook more at once. Bake multiple dishes together when possible and make larger portions to freeze for later.
- Cut food into small pieces. Small pieces of vegetables and meat cook faster and more evenly than large ones.
- Skip the self-cleaning cycle. Use it sparingly, since it requires very high heat and uses extra energy.
- Turn down the thermostat while cooking. Cooking and baking can warm your home quickly, especially when guests are gathered.

REFRIGERATION

- Let leftovers cool slightly. Allow hot foods to cool before refrigerating (but do not leave them out too long). This keeps your refrigerator from working harder to cool warm food.
- Check the door seal. Make sure the refrigerator door closes tightly. Test the seal by closing the door on a dollar bill. If it slides out easily, the gasket may need to be replaced.
- Prevent frost buildup. Too much frost can make the freezer work harder to maintain the right temperature.
- Keep it full but not crowded. Refrigerators work best when cold air can circulate.

DISHWASHING

- Run full loads. Wait until the dishwasher is full before running it to make the most of each cycle.
- Skip heated dry. Use the air-dry or eco-mode setting to dry dishes while reducing energy use.

Small changes in how you cook, cool and clean up can help save energy, no matter the season.

Bake Up This *holiday bread recipe* and Kitchen Safety

Warm up the kitchen with a festive favorite, perfect for gifting or a holiday dessert tray.
And before you bake, take a few simple steps to keep your kitchen and your loved ones safe.

CRANBERRY-ORANGE QUICK BREAD

Ingredients

- **2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **¾ cup sugar**
- **1 ½ tsp. baking powder**
- **½ tsp. baking soda**
- **½ tsp. salt**
- **¾ cup orange juice**
- **¼ cup vegetable oil or melted butter**
- **1 egg**
- **1 Tbsp. orange zest**
- **1 ½ cups fresh or frozen cranberries, roughly chopped**
- **½ cup chopped walnuts or pecans (optional)**

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan.

In a large bowl, whisk flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt.

In a separate bowl, whisk orange juice, oil or butter, egg and orange zest.

Stir wet ingredients into dry ingredients until combined. Fold in cranberries and nuts, if using.

Pour into a loaf pan and bake for 50 to 60 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Cool before slicing.

OPTIONAL GLAZE: Mix ¾ cup powdered sugar with 1 tablespoon orange juice. Drizzle over cooled bread.

KITCHEN SAFETY TIPS

- Stay in the kitchen while baking; check food often and use a timer.
- Keep flammable items (towels, mitts, packaging) away from the stovetop.
- Use GFCI outlets for countertop appliances near water.
- Check appliances for damaged cords or plugs.
- Unplug small appliances when not in use.
- Plug high-wattage appliances directly into wall outlets.
- Keep kids at least 3 feet away from the stove.
- For oven fires, turn off heat and keep the door closed.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

Optimize Your HVAC System

Continued from page 12A ▶

conditioned air to escape before it reaches the rooms where you need it. If you've noticed rooms that never seem to be comfortable or unusually high energy use, ask an HVAC professional to inspect your ductwork.

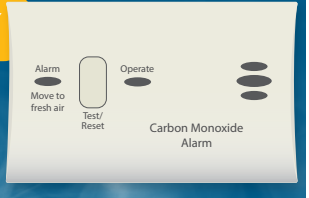
Fall is also an ideal time for a professional tune-up. A technician can inspect your heating system, identify potential problems, and make sure it is operating safely and efficiently before the coldest weather arrives. Regular professional maintenance can also help extend the life of your equipment.

Finally, take more control of your energy use by proactively managing your thermostat. There's no reason to heat an empty house. Lowering the temperature when you're away can help reduce energy use. And think about lowering the temperature while you sleep too! A programmable or smart thermostat can make those adjustments automatically, taking one more thing off your to-do list.

Your home heating system has an important job this winter. Give it a little extra attention this fall to help the system operate more efficiently, reduce unnecessary energy use and potentially prevent an inconvenient breakdown on a cold winter night.



CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY



As home heating use increases, so do cases of carbon monoxide (CO) leaks. CO is an invisible, odorless, colorless and tasteless gas. CO detectors help keep your home and family safe.

- Test your carbon monoxide detector monthly to help save a life.
- Check the device's expiration date. Replace the device if need be.
- Never run a generator inside or in an enclosed space. Do not run a generator near windows, doors or in garages.

SYMPTOMS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISIONING:

- Headache
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Vomiting

If you experience these symptoms and/or your CO alarm sounds, immediately move outside to fresh air. Call 911 and notify them you believe you have a buildup of CO in your home. Do not reenter your home until you are told it is safe to do so.

KEEP THESE SAFETY TIPS IN MIND.

SOURCES: CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION, NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION AND NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

MAXIMIZE
System Performance.
MINIMIZE
Energy Waste.

No matter the age of your heating or cooling system, regular maintenance can help your system run efficiently, keep energy costs in check and extend its life.

FILTER CARE

EVERY 2-3 MONTHS



- Check and replace your air filter as recommended. A dirty filter can restrict airflow and make your system work harder.
- Keep return and supply vents clear of furniture, rugs and other obstructions. Dust them regularly.

OUTDOOR UNIT CARE

ONCE OR TWICE A YEAR



- Keep leaves, grass and other debris at least 2 feet away from the outdoor unit.
- Gently rinse dirty condenser coils with a garden hose, following your manufacturer's recommendations.

PROACTIVE SERVICE

TWICE A YEAR



- Schedule professional tune-ups in spring for cooling and fall for heating.
- Have ductwork checked for leaks or disconnected sections, and seal leaks with mastic or foil-backed tape.

THERMOSTAT SMARTS

YEAR-ROUND

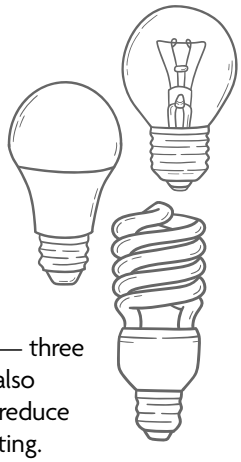


- Adjust your thermostat when you're asleep or away. In summer, set it a little higher; in winter, a little lower.
- Consider a programmable or smart thermostat to automatically manage temperatures and save energy.

A LITTLE MAINTENANCE CAN GO A LONG WAY. CONTACT YOUR ELECTRIC CO-OP IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT HOME ENERGY USE.

SOURCE: NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

Bright Ideas for Lowering Your Electric Bill



Save energy at home with efficient lighting

Changing a light bulb may seem small, but the right bulb can make a noticeable difference on your electric bill. Lighting accounts for 15% of an average home's electricity use, so switching to energy-efficient bulbs can be one of the fastest and easiest ways to save energy.

Today's most common lighting options are LED bulbs, compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) bulbs, and halogen incandescent bulbs. According to Energy.gov, halogen incandescent bulbs meet federal minimum energy efficiency standards but are not the most efficient choice.

For the biggest energy savings, LEDs and CFLs offer the greatest return. Energy Star-certified LED bulbs use up to 90% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs and last 15 to 25 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs. With the average U.S. household using about 70 light bulbs, switching to energy-efficient lighting can add up to significant long-term savings.

LED bulbs typically cost more upfront than CFL bulbs, but since they last longer and use less energy, the cost can be offset over time.

HERE'S A BREAKDOWN OF HOW THE MOST COMMON LIGHTING OPTIONS COMPARE:

- **LED BULBS:** LED bulbs are the most energy-efficient lighting option available. They are designed to turn more electricity into light and waste less energy as heat. Because they direct light where it's needed, they're ideal for recessed downlights, task lighting and accent lighting. LEDs can last up to 34 years — three to five times longer than CFLs. They also produce very little heat, which helps reduce energy waste and the risk of overheating.
- **CFL BULBS:** CFLs are compact versions of fluorescent tube lights commonly found in older kitchens, garages and workplaces. They use about 70% to 75% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer, with an average lifespan of 14 years. While they're much more efficient than incandescent bulbs, about 80% of the energy they use is still lost as heat.
- **HALOGEN INCANDESCENT BULBS:** These are an improved version of the traditional incandescent bulbs. A small capsule of halogen gas allows the filament to operate more efficiently, using about 20% to 30% less energy than standard incandescent bulbs. They are fully dimmable and come in a wide variety of shapes and colors. However, they have the shortest lifespan of the three options, lasting 4.2 years on average.

For more information on energy efficiency, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

SAVE SOME GREEN ON ENERGY BILLS THIS WINTER

How can you save on heating costs this winter? Some answers to that question are simple: Turn down the thermostat a few degrees from your usual setting and dress in layers. Keep your feet warm and have plenty of blankets nearby.

Most people like to pull up the covers at night when it's cold outside. Use flannel sheets and a thick comforter so you can turn down your thermostat while you sleep.

It also helps to use insulated or lined curtains to keep cold air out, not only in your bedroom but throughout your home.

OTHER ENERGY-SAVING TIPS INCLUDE:

- Get your heating system regularly maintained by an HVAC professional so that it is working at peak efficiency. Keep your furnace clean and change the filter monthly.
- Vacuum or clean vents regularly.
- Keep fireplace dampers closed when not in use. If you do not use your fireplace, plug and seal the flue.
- Do not heat an empty home. A programmable or smart thermostat can help this become automatic. According to the Department of Energy, lowering the temperature by 7 to 10 degrees for 8 hours a day can reduce energy costs by up to 10%.
- Seal uncontrolled air leaks. Use weather stripping around doors and windows as needed. Check attics, attic access, outlets, walls and chimneys, as well as pipes entering or exiting your home for common sources of air leaks.
- Let the sunshine in during the day to use Mother Nature's warmth. Close window coverings after dusk, however, to reduce heat loss.
- Set ceiling fans to run clockwise to push down and redistribute warm air that naturally rises.
- Consider turning down your water heater to 120 or 125 F. Also install a water heater blanket to insulate it and help warm your water faster.
- Consider updating your furnace or HVAC system with an energy-efficient model by looking for the Energy Star designation when it's time to replace it.
- Decrease use of built-in ventilation fans in your kitchen and bathrooms. In the colder months, they transfer heat from inside your home to the backyard. Use the fans only when needed and turn them off as soon as you can.