Win a water saver that cuts hot water costs too!
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Who will you call if your air conditioner conks out?

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6 Iowa students celebrate 50 years of Youth Tour
A lot’s changed since the national Rural Electric Youth Tour was born in 1964, but one thing’s stayed the same: students who never fail to be amazed, inspired, humbled and grateful.

8 Picnic recipes for family fun/
Here are eight good reasons to head outside for lunch! PLUS: Receive a $25 credit on your power bill if we include your recipe for healthy after-school snacks in an upcoming issue.

10 Save on water heating – inside and outside
Replacing your water heater? Check the latest options. PLUS: Limit swimming pool heat loss.

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Level B roads beckon with adventure – and solitude.

Energy-saving tip of the month
During summer, close the curtains or blinds. Turning on a table lamp with an energy-saving lightbulb is a better choice than letting the sun stream in through a south or west window. On the other hand, north or east windows could provide enough light without significantly adding to the heat gain in an individual room.

YOUTH TOUR PHOTOS
(Cover, left) The National Museum of the Marine Corps was voted one of the most popular stops on the trip by Iowa’s students. (Cover, right) Elizabeth Boyer – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, Brittany Thelen – Midland Power Cooperative, and Leah Riese and Sarah Schnuelle – Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, Inc., posed at the United States Air Force Memorial. (Top, this page) Cathryn Yoder, Pella Cooperative Electric, showed off her Iowa flag at the Youth Day celebration.

How to Contact Us

WE’D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!
Letters may be edited for clarity and length before publication.

E-mail: editor@livingwithenergyiniowa.com
Address: Editor, Living with Energy in Iowa magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

SUBMITTING A RECIPE
You may submit a recipe to be considered for publication in an upcoming issue. Recipes appearing in the magazine also may be shown on the Living with Energy in Iowa website at www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the month’s recipe category on all submissions.

E-mail: recipes@livingwithenergyiniowa.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or a PDF to your e-mail message, rather than including it in the body of your message.)

Address: Recipes, Living with Energy in Iowa magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

CHANGE OF ADDRESS
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A Touchstone Energy Cooperative
Volume 67 • Issue 7
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Living with Energy in Iowa magazine (ISSN: 1935-7176) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa’s member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase Living with Energy in Iowa is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

Telephone: 515-276-5350. E-mail: editor@livingwithenergyiniowa.com
Website: www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com. Living with Energy in Iowa magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Living with Energy in Iowa magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

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EPA’s new rules will increase your power bill

BY MARION DENGER

Your electric cooperative’s main priority as your electricity provider is to ensure that when you turn on a light switch, you have the power you need for your home, farm or business. We also know that you need and expect that power to be affordable.

To meet your electricity needs in a safe, reliable, cost-effective and environmentally responsible manner, member-owners of Iowa’s electric cooperatives are served from a diverse portfolio of sustainable electric generation resources. We provide dependable power 24 hours a day, seven days a week from base load resources such as coal, nuclear, natural gas and hydro. We also include intermittent renewable resources, including wind and solar.

On June 2, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released requirements aimed at cutting carbon emissions from existing electric generating facilities. The proposed rules have the potential to significantly impact Iowa and the Midwest more than other parts of the country.

We’re concerned that the suggested rules will increase electric bills; the question is, “How much?” The intended rules are complex and will take considerable and careful analysis to understand their effect on our cooperative member-owners. We’ve already started: To allow us enough time to receive a thorough analysis of how EPA’s proposed rules will impact electric bills and overall reliability, Iowa’s electric cooperatives recently worked in a bipartisan effort with our congressional representatives to successfully urge the EPA to extend its standard comment period on the proposed rules from 60 to 120 days.

Fundamentally, the proposed EPA regulations create uncertainty about our ongoing energy supply. Costs to operate coal-fired generation, which is one of our nation’s most reliable and cost-effective sources of power, could be increased significantly. We don’t believe that potentially forcing the premature shutdown of coal-fired power facilities is a sustainable solution for Iowa’s co-op member-owners – or millions of other electric utility customers across the country.

Iowa’s electric cooperatives support responsible environmental policies that balance the needs of the environment without significantly affecting quality of life, impacting electric bills or influencing power reliability. In fact, we already have invested millions of dollars in energy-efficiency programs and services, installed environmental upgrades to existing generating facilities and integrated cooperative and member-owned renewable resources – wind, solar, biomass and methane – into our portfolio.

Working toward a sustainable environment is a 24/7, 365 days-a-year proposition, and power reliability is a key driver of our promise to deliver exceptional customer service to you. We’re committed to achieving long-term, balanced and sensible energy solutions that protect the environment and the interests of our member-owners.

Marion Denger is president of both the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and Prairie Energy Cooperative in Clarion.

You need to get involved!

You still have time to contact the EPA, which last month released rules that could cost electric cooperative member-owners a lot of money on their power bills. These regulations have imposed costly restrictions on our existing fleet of coal-fired power plants, and you need to let the EPA know that these new requirements will have a significant financial impact on your family.

Please go to the Cooperative Action Network website at www.action.coop and send a message to the EPA. Member-owners across the country are joining you in this effort, to make sure all of your voices are heard in Washington, D.C.
**In the News**

**Clothes dryers added to Energy Star program**

After nearly 2 years’ worth of input from manufacturers, retailers, the U.S. Department of Energy and environmental groups, new Energy Star® specifications will recognize highly efficient electric, gas and compact clothes dryers that use approximately 20 percent less energy than what’s required by minimum federal efficiency standards effective in 2015. The addition of clothes dryers expands the range of Energy Star products to include one of the most energy-intensive home appliances not yet covered by the program. If all residential clothes dryers sold in the U.S. met the new efficiency requirements, the total utility cost savings would grow to more than $1.5 billion each year.

Consumers should expect to encounter a promising new clothes-drying technology too: a heat pump clothes dryer that recaptures the hot air used and pumps it back into the drum to dry more clothes. By reusing most of the heat, the heat pump dryer eliminates the need for a duct to vent warm air from the laundry room. The new Energy Star standard also establishes optional “connected” criteria for residential clothes dryers that will offer consumers convenience and energy-savings features such as an alert indicating there is a performance issue or feedback on the energy efficiency of different cycle selections.

**ABCs of Electricity**

**Power lines must be clear to deliver dependable electricity**

Trees may seem harmless on a calm, sunny day. But add a bit of wind on a stormy night, and those towering specimens may threaten the power supply to your home.

Your electric cooperative is committed to providing your family with safe, reliable power. One way your co-op fulfills that promise is by controlling the growth of plants and trees along rights of way – the paths the power lines take, often through wooded areas and locations with other vegetation. In both public and private spaces, your co-op uses a carefully crafted vegetation management program to remove “danger trees” that threaten power lines, clear problem tree branches, eliminate debris and control brush growth and regrowth.

Your co-op may employ the services of a contractor to handle these maintenance jobs. If you have questions about the vegetation management program in your area (whether or not it directly impacts your property), please call your electric cooperative.

**Doing It Yourself**

**Regular air conditioner maintenance means lower costs**

There are several maintenance tasks you can do each year to keep your air conditioner running efficiently, but don’t eliminate an annual professional tune-up. Modern cooling systems no longer are simple devices. They’re packed with electronic circuit boards and computerized controls, and you have no way to test them without specialized test equipment and training.

- Before you start, read the instructions that came with your system – and be sure to turn off power to the unit. If you’re not comfortable handling any of these jobs, leave them to a technician.
- Check filters monthly and clean or replace them as needed.
- Once a year, clean the evaporator coil inside with a biodegradable cleaner and a soft brush – but only if it’s easily accessible.
- Clean the condensate pan and make sure the drain hose isn’t plugged.
- Remove debris around the condensing unit outside and trim bushes and grass to maintain airflow.
- When dirt has built up outside, clean the condenser coils. Use a biodegradable cleaner and a soft brush to gently clean the coils and flush them with clean water. Also clean the compressor’s fan blades. Don’t just blast the parts with a hose!
- Straighten the fins in both the evaporator and condenser coils with a fin comb from an air-conditioning parts supplier.
Editor’s Choice Contest

Win a water saver that cuts hot water costs too!

How many times have you stood outside the shower, reaching in to see if the water’s warm enough? That wait wastes a lot of hot water!

The new Tempo20 Hand Shower from Delta solves that problem, because it lets you know – by way of its water-powered, color LED display (no batteries) – when the water reaches your desired temperature. This feature also can offer peace of mind, because it will show you when the water is a safe temperature for kids, grandkids and pets.

The easy-to-clean showerhead is WaterSense certified and has six push-button-controlled adjustable spray settings that flow up to 2.0 gallons per minute to promote water conservation. In addition, the 6-foot hose connects to any standard half-inch shower arm without tools, and there’s a lifetime limited warranty on parts and the chrome finish.

Suggested retail price of the Delta Tempo20 Hand Shower in chrome is about $80 at The Home Depot and the company’s website. For more information, go to www.homedepot.com and enter this model number in the search box on the home page: 75628.

Visit our website, and win!

We’re going to give a Delta Tempo20 Hand Shower to one lucky reader this month. To enter the contest, please visit the all-new Living with Energy in Iowa website at www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com and complete the entry form by July 31, 2014.

You must be a member of one of Iowa’s electric cooperatives to be eligible for this contest. There’s no obligation associated with entering, and we don’t share entrant information with anyone. Please enter the contest only once; if you enter multiple times, you’ll be disqualified.

We’ll pick the winner’s name at random and publish it in an upcoming issue. The winner of the energy-saving switches and dimmers in the May issue was John Rohrer, a member of Prairie Energy Cooperative.

Chill out this summer with a cool roof!

See! An Energy Star qualified Cool Roof will look just like a normal roof.

So, the solar-reflecting granules in the shingles will reduce roof temperatures during the summer... and help cut our air-conditioning bills.

There are plenty of color choices too.

Cool! Maybe we should paint the whole house to match the new roof!
Iowa students celebrate

“Youth Tour has allowed me to see and experience things I had only read about before.”
Reese Vedder • Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative

“I learned to never say ‘never’ and to live life to the fullest – never backing down, and never giving up on the hopes and dreams and goals that I have for myself.”
Tonia Medina • Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

1. Hart Senate Office Building atrium with Sen. Tom Harkin
2. Soup Line Statue at Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
3. Pappajohn Sculpture Park in Des Moines, after first plane to Washington, D.C., was cancelled!
4. On the Senate steps with Sen. Chuck Grassley
5. Honor Flight participants from Waterloo, Iowa, with Susan Schwickerath – Hawkeye REC, who was selected to represent Iowa on the Youth Leadership Council
6. Reaching for the sky at the United States Air Force Memorial

Next Youth Tour • June 12-18, 2015
Details? • www.youthtour.coop
Blog • iowayouthtour.blogspot.com

“Too bad it was only a week.”
Steven Davidson • Lyon REC
50 years of Youth Tour

“I can’t wait to go out into the world and make a difference and let my voice be heard.”
Megan Hoenig • Access Energy Cooperative

“Youth Tour was undoubtedly the best week of my life. I learned so much about cooperatives, politics and even met my best friends on this unforgettable experience of a lifetime.”
Cathryn Yoder • Pella Cooperative Electric

“Wonderfully organized and very informational!”
Dannielle Hamblen • Harrison County REC

(From left) Vince Doud – Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.; Cody O’Donnell, Franklin REC; Rep. Tom Latham; and Alexa Moon – Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc., meeting on the House steps

Brittany Theilen – Midland Power Cooperative, who grabbed a selfie after the U.S. Marines Sunset Parade

Lunch at Ben’s Chili Bowl

(From left) Kiley Vinyard, Southern Iowa Power Cooperative, Inc.; Megan Pickhinke, Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative; and Katie Dyson, Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc., getting ready for a Potomac River boat cruise

Youth Day, for all 1,600 participants from around the country

Alex Byrnes – Heartland Power Cooperative, who left roses during the Father’s Day Rose Remembrance Ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial
**TIP**

**INSTANT APPETIZER**
Keep a block of cream cheese and several toppers on hand for an instant appetizer. Toppings could include chutneys, sun-dried tomatoes, roasted red peppers, nuts or sweet toppings such as ice cream toppings, nuts, chocolate chips or coconut. Serve with crackers.

---

**Peanut Butter Chip Cookies**

- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup peanut butter
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup white sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup chocolate chips
- Sugar

In a mixing bowl, cream butter, peanut butter and sugars. Beat in egg, milk and vanilla. Combine flour, baking soda and salt and add to creamed mixture; mix well. Stir in chocolate chips. Roll into 1-inch balls and roll in sugar. Place 2 inches apart on baking sheet. Flatten, if desired. Bake at 375 degrees for 7-9 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to racks to cool. Makes 4 dozen.

Charlene High ∙ Cantril
Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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**Spiced Pears**

- 1 can sliced light pears with juice
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- Pinch of salt

Pour pears and juice into a saucepan, add the spices and simmer until hot. Serve warm or cold.

Margaret Wosepka ∙ Ackley ∙ Franklin REC

---

**Pasta Salad**

- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup diced onion
- ¾ cup vinegar
- 1 teaspoon poppy seeds
- 1 cup oil
- 1½ boxes rotini pasta, cooked and rinsed
- Broccoli florets
- Grape tomatoes
- Red, yellow and green bell peppers, diced
- 1 package string cheese, diced, to taste

Combine sugar, mustard, salt, onion, vinegar and poppy seeds in a blender jar, and mix. Slowly add oil while continuing to blend. Combine pasta, vegetables and cheese and toss with dressing mixture.

Carol Wettstein ∙ Moulton
Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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**Fantastic Fruit Salad**

Canned or fresh peaches, pineapple tidbits, mandarin oranges, kiwis, red grapes, bananas and maraschino cherries, as desired

- 1 box sugar-free, cook-anderve vanilla pudding
- 2 cups orange juice

Drain and cut desired fruit into bite-sized pieces. Combine pudding mix and orange juice and cook until thickened. When cool (but not cold), pour over fruit mixture and chill.

Deleta Landphair ∙ Humeston
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Breaded Ranch Chicken

¾ cup corn flake cereal, crushed
¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 envelope ranch salad dressing mix
4 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
½ cup melted butter

Combine crushed cereal, cheese and salad dressing mix. Dip chicken pieces in melted butter and then roll them in the dry mixture to coat. Place in a greased 9 x 13-inch baking dish. Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Melanie Schock ∙ Moulton
Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Potato Salad

5 pounds potatoes, peeled, diced and cooked
9 eggs, hardboiled and chopped
½ cup diced onion
1 cup chopped celery
Salt and pepper, to taste
2½ cups salad dressing
½ cup sugar
1 12-ounce can evaporated milk
½ cup pickle relish
2 tablespoons mustard

Combine potatoes, eggs, onion, celery, salt and pepper; mix well. Combine remaining ingredients in another bowl and mix until smooth and creamy. Pour over potatoes and mix well. Best if salad is refrigerated for several hours or overnight for flavors to work through salad.

Dee Tasler ∙ Gowrie
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

Poppy Seed Coleslaw

¾ cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons mustard
2 tablespoons poppy seeds
½ cup honey
1 package coleslaw mix
Salt and pepper, to taste

Mix mayonnaise, mustard, poppy seeds and honey together; pour over coleslaw mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Karen Krier ∙ Remsen ∙ North West REC

15-Minute Oatmeal Bars

1 cup butter
1 cup brown sugar
¼ cup light corn syrup
4 cups quick oatmeal
¼ cup peanut butter
1 cup milk chocolate chips

Melt butter, brown sugar and syrup together in microwave. Add oatmeal and pat mixture into a greased 9 x 13-inch pan. Bake at 425 degrees for 10 minutes. After 5 minutes, push edges down to keep bars flat. Melt peanut butter and chocolate chips in microwave for 2 minutes or until smooth. Spread on bars, cool and cut to serve.

Marci Domnick ∙ Rock Rapids ∙ Lyon REC

WANTED:
Healthy recipes for after-school snacks

THE REWARD: $25 for every one we publish!

When the kids get home from school, they’re hungry. Instead of just tossing them an apple or a handful of carrot sticks, what’s your favorite healthy recipe to keep them going until dinnertime? If we run it in the magazine, we’ll send a $25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes appearing in the magazine also may be shown on our website at www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com.

The deadline is July 31, 2014. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

E-mail: recipes@livingwithenergyiniowa.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your e-mail message, rather than including it in the body of your message.)

Mail: Living with Energy in Iowa magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992.

TIP
BLUE: GOOD FOR YOU
Blueberries contain antioxidants and phytonutrients that can help lower cholesterol and keep cancer at bay—and they retain their health benefits even if frozen.

TIP
GRILLED FRUIT
Add a little lemon juice to the soaking water to preserve the color of fruits. Also feel free to experiment with different spices such as cinnamon or nutmeg. (Adding sugar is not necessary!)

TIP
LIMIT PORTION SIZE
Dieting? You can still eat most of your favorite foods if you practice a little moderation. Educate yourself on what a real serving size is—it’s usually smaller than you think.

TIP
Save on water heating – inside and outside

Hot options for hot water

BY SHEILA YOUNT

Heating water is one of the biggest users of energy in your home, so it’s important to do your homework when the time comes to replace your old water heater or buy one for a new home. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, water-heating costs make up about 14 percent of a typical single-family home’s energy bill, compared with 29 percent for heating and 17 percent for cooling.

When choosing a water heater, the first decision to make is what size to buy. A 50-gallon unit is usually adequate for an average family. Next, look for the bright yellow EnergyGuide tag and check the unit’s energy factor (EF) rating. You should install an electric water heater with the highest EF rating possible – at least .90, which means that it’s 90 percent efficient. Although operating costs may be more or less than for an electric water heater, a natural gas water heater is an inherently less efficient energy user because a significant amount of energy escapes through the unit’s flue.

Two of the most efficient electric water heaters available today are the Marathon, produced by Rheem, and the General Electric GeoSpring Hybrid. Some electric co-ops have been offering the Marathon water heater to co-op members for many years. It comes with a lifetime warranty on the tank, which is made of a tough, lightweight polyethylene outer shell that’s guaranteed to never leak or rust. It’s also insulated with foam and has an energy factor rating of .91-.95.

If you want an even more efficient unit, check out the G.E. GeoSpring Hybrid water heater. It’s Energy Star® qualified and has an energy factor of 2.35 – that’s 235 percent efficiency. The GeoSpring uses heat pump technology to heat the water.

And, if you’re thinking about...
replacing your entire heating-and-cooling system, note that you can get virtually free hot water at least part of the year as a byproduct of a geothermal heating-and-cooling system. Instead of exhausting waste heat to the outdoor air like a standard heat pump does when the geothermal heat pump is cooling your home, this waste heat is diverted to your water heater. The device is called a desuperheater, and it’s offered as a standard or optional feature on most geothermal heat pumps.

Here are some ways to trim water-heating costs

- Make sure your water heater is set at 120 degrees. This level will provide adequate hot water for most families.
- When possible, place your electric water heater on a 2-inch-thick rigid insulation board to insulate the bottom of the tank.
- Insulate hot water pipes to reduce heat losses as the hot water flows to your faucet or showerhead – and help minimize standby losses when the tap is turned on more than once an hour.
- Locate your water heater in a conditioned area, preferably close to the center of the house.
- If you own an electric water heater with an energy factor of less than .90, consider adding an insulating blanket over the unit to further insulate it. Check with the water heater’s manufacturer to make sure this is OK.

occupied, but its effectiveness is diminished when swimmers or wind currents disturb the pool’s surface. Savings from a chemical cover often will be less than from a traditional cover.

A pool cover provides the highest energy savings when used regularly. Deciding whether to invest in a conventional cover, chemical cover or both depends on the number of hours you and your family spend in the water. Other factors include the labor costs to move and store the cover, as well as activity levels in the pool and ambient conditions.

Brian Sloboda is a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network.
Product Recalls

Even though it’s less than a year old, this space heater is a fire hazard

In cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Sunbeam Products has recalled the product shown here; follow the instructions below to receive a refund. To report a problem with another product you believe is unsafe, go to www.safeproducts.gov. For details on recalls in any product category, go to the CPSC website at www.cpsc.gov or call the agency’s Hotline at 800-638-2772 from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Time. Note that it is illegal to resell or attempt to resell a recalled consumer product.

Holmes Ceramic Heater

UNITS: About 151,600
IMPORTER: Sunbeam Products, Inc., of Boca Raton, Fla.
HAZARD: The ceramic heater can overheat, posing a fire hazard to consumers.
INCIDENTS/INJURIES: The company has received 132 reports of units that unexpectedly stopped working and/or overheated, resulting in one report of smoke inhalation and 10 reports of property damage involving burned flooring.
DESCRIPTION: This recall involves Holmes oscillating ceramic heaters sold in black, purple, red, blue and white. The rectangular heaters included in the recall are about 12 inches tall, 8 ½ inches wide and 5 ½ inches deep, and they have model number HCH1823M printed on a label on the bottom of the product. The “Holmes” logo is on the bottom front of the unit, and two knobs controlling the fan and the thermostat are on the top. The heater adjusts between a high and low heat setting and a fan-only setting.
SOLD AT: Target, Walmart, Fred Meyer and other retailers nationwide from August 2013 to March 2014 for about $30
MANUFACTURED IN: China
REMEDY: Immediately stop using the recalled heater, unplug it and contact Sunbeam Products, Inc. for instructions on how to obtain a full refund.

CONSUMER CONTACT: Call Sunbeam Products at 800-834-0056 anytime, or go to the company’s website at www.holmesproducts.com and click on “Ceramic Heater Recall” for more information.

These recalls may interest you too

For more details on these product recalls, enter the Recall Number in the Search Box at the top of CPSC’s Home Page: www.cpsc.gov.

Fluorescent Shop Lights

MANUFACTURER: Cordelia Lighting Inc.
HAZARD: Electrical arc and fire
RECALL NUMBER: 14-190

Home Heating and Cooling Thermostats

MANUFACTURER: White-Rodgers
HAZARD: Fire
RECALL NUMBER: 14-166

Baby Food Processor

MANUFACTURER: Hamilton Beach Brands Inc.
HAZARD: Part falls into processed food
RECALL NUMBER: 14-193

I LIKE TO TAKE IT EASY ON VACATION. SO DOES MY ENERGY BILL.

I’m saving money by adjusting my thermostat before I go on vacation. What can you do? Find out how the little changes add up at TogetherWeSave.com.

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa
www.touchstoneenergy.coop
TOGETHERWESAVE.COM

I’m saving money by adjusting my thermostat before I go on vacation. What can you do? Find out how the little changes add up at TogetherWeSave.com.
In the News

Visit the Touchstone Energy booth at the Iowa State Fair

During the Iowa State Fair Aug. 7-17, Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa once again will sponsor an energy-efficiency display inside the 4H Exhibits Building on the south side of the fairgrounds. The exhibit will offer the latest information on many energy-saving topics, including insulation types and effectiveness, reducing air infiltration, lighting options, water heating, heat pumps and recycling old appliances.

Representatives from Touchstone Energy Cooperatives will be on hand from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. each day to answer your questions about energy-efficiency projects and rebates offered by Iowa’s local electric cooperatives. You’ll also be able to enter the daily drawing to win one of two $25 gift cards that will be given away every day of the fair.

The Touchstone Energy booth also will feature an energy bike that allows you to pedal and generate electricity to power items such as light bulbs, a radio or fan. The experience will show you, for example, how much more energy is required to light inefficient bulbs compared to compact fluorescent light bulbs or LEDs.

For information on how you can start saving energy and dollars now, go to www.togetherwesave.com.

Do your part to help reduce peak loads this summer

The hottest days of summer – when energy demand at your local electric cooperative is highest – place a lot of stress on Iowa’s utility network. These times of peak loads potentially can lead to limited power supply disruptions, and – with so many people using electricity for air-conditioning at the same time – the price of power during this period may increase, because it costs more to generate electricity when consumer demand soars.

The greatest peak loads generally occur from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m., when the air-conditioning systems in most buildings are running and families arrive home and start using household appliances. You can help reduce summer peak loads by adjusting your daily routine in a few small ways, such as using small appliances instead of the cooktop or stove for cooking, doing laundry during early-morning or late-evening hours, closing windows and using curtains or blinds during the day to keep the sun from overheating your home.

Last year, Doug Bowman (right), a member service representative from Midland Power Cooperative, used the energy bike to show a young fairgoer how much less energy is needed to power energy-efficient light bulbs, compared to traditional, energy-wasting incandescent light bulbs.

Did you know?

Between Earth Day 2013 and Earth Day 2014, retailers across the country participated in the Energy Star® challenge to replace energy-wasting incandescent light bulbs with LEDs. More than 20 million Energy Star certified LED bulbs were sold – often at discount prices or in conjunction with electric utility rebates – at retailers, including Ace Hardware, Best Buy, Costco, Lowe’s and The Home Depot.

Energy Star qualified LEDs use 70-90 percent less energy and can last 25 times longer than standard incandescent bulbs. In addition, a single LED can save $40-$135 in electricity costs during its lifetime.

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Who will you call if your air conditioner conks out?

By James Dulley

All too often an old central air conditioner or heat pump will stop working on the hottest day of the year, because it’s been running almost nonstop to keep the house cool. In addition, the efficiency and cooling output of the unit will drop as the outdoor temperature gets hotter, putting even more strain on the old compressor – and especially the bearings and valves.

If you’ve been having your system tuned up every year, you already may know a good air-conditioning contractor you can trust to replace your old unit with an energy-smart new one. On the other hand, if you’re like many people who wait until the system fails, you’ll have to make sure you go through the appropriate steps to protect yourself as you evaluate estimates from at least three contractors. Also be sure to check on the availability of rebates or incentives from your electric cooperative before you start the search.

When selecting a contractor, first check with relatives and friends about the companies they’ve used; be sure to ask about their overall satisfaction with the work performed – and talk about specifics such as whether the workers showed up on time, cleaned up after themselves and stayed within the budget. In addition, when a potential contractor gives you a list of references, call each one. Past customers often are afraid to offend a “nice guy” contractor, so they won’t tell him or her directly about any problems they’ve experienced. However, these unhappy folks likely will share their negative experiences with you, which will help you make your hiring decision.

If you don’t have a source for contractor names, check with the Air-Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) and the Sheet Metal and Air-Conditioning Contractors’ National Association (SMACNA). Reputable contractors will belong to one or both of these organizations, which can give you a list of members in your area. You also can join Angie’s List for a few dollars (www.angieslist.com) to get recommendations from people who live near you.

When bidding on installing a new system, a reputable contractor will need to do a lot of investigating and calculating on a worksheet or computer to come up with the correct rating for your cooling system – considering things such as the size, style, orientation and shading of your home; insulation levels; window types, locations and sizes; air infiltration; location and condition of ducts; lighting and appliances in use; weather; your family’s lifestyle; and your comfort preferences. The written bid you receive should detail the sizing calculations in writing. Don’t accept an estimate that’s based only on recommending the same size cooling unit you have now, the square footage of your house or any other rule of thumb. Improper sizing will result in higher utility bills and poor comfort levels. In fact, oversizing is a real problem; not only do oversized units consume more energy, they also remove less moisture from your home and have a shorter service life.

A knowledgeable contractor should ask if you currently have any heating and cooling problems, particularly with various rooms. If so, your system may need additional supply and return ducts and air registers. This can significantly increase the overall cost (while increasing efficiency and comfort), so the lowest estimate is not always the one you should select.

If your system has just broken down and you have at least three contractors who have given you quotes, be wary of ones who immediately want to replace the system with a new one. They first should determine the current problem and provide a quote for repair. Take your time to evaluate the quotes and recommendations. Although your family might be uncomfortably warm for several days, don’t rush your decision. It’s not as dire as having your furnace go out during winter when your water pipes may freeze if the system’s not fixed immediately.

Have a question? Send inquiries to James Dulley, Living with Energy in Iowa magazine, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 – or visit www.dulley.com.

One of the most effective projects you can handle yourself is sealing duct joints with metal duct tape made for the job. (Don’t use cloth duct tape!)
Level B roads beckon with adventure—and solitude

By Valerie Van Kooten

Iowa is peppered with “minimum maintenance” roads, Level B and C roads that run off the larger gravel roads in our rural areas. At one time, many of these lanes were major thoroughfares for traffic; now, they remain the province of farmers taking a shortcut to a back field or folks who want to explore new terrain with an ATV.

These roads always have called to me as a source of adventure and solitude. One such mile-long path acts as a connector of two busy gravel roads northeast of Pella, where my grandparents lived when I was a child. On the way home from their house, my brother, sister and I invariably would beg my dad to take the “Whee Road” – so named because it had steep hills that would make our stomachs flop as we flew over them, prompting a “Whee!” from everyone in the car.

If the road wasn’t muddy, Dad would oblige, and we’d get our thrill for the week until our next visit.

This little road was bordered on both sides by wooded meadows, the fences littered with “Keep Out” signs scrawled onto old tires. My grandparents’ family owned some of this land, and my grandma would take us grandkids into these bucolic pastures in the spring and help us find mushrooms or the earliest flowers of the season – Dutchmen’s breeches, jacks in the pulpit and my favorite, large wood violets.

In the fall, we’d gather leaves for the requisite leaf collections at school and vie for the most unusual-looking acorns. If the day was warm, we’d wade in the creek that ran through the field and, unhindered by fences, traversed the meadows down the road.

We always had to beware of cow pies or the stray bull in the pasture. And I’m sure mosquitoes and ticks and mud were a hazard, though I don’t remember them. The only thing that comes to memory is picking large bouquets of spring beauty flowers – most of which had wilted by the time I got them to a vase – or picking up a prize leaf to be pressed in the behemoth dictionary we had at home.

By the time I got to high school, I quit visiting the Whee Road, although my brother and dad hunted there. I also heard a few rumors about young couples being surprised late in the night when they parked there.

Now I have my own spot on our acreage, along the creek that meanders through my parents’ land and joins up with Thunder Creek a half mile away. Sometimes I bring my book and read there, look for flowers or check out the baby calves that wander through my domain, sharing my solitude. I don’t make it to the Whee Road much anymore.

However, one day several months ago, my husband and I were in the area northeast of town, and on a whim we cut over to my favorite childhood road. Though barriers had been erected on either end, they were open this day and the dusty dirt road beckoned. The same hills were there, and we flew across them as I did when I was little.

And yes, my stomach still flopped. Whee!

Valerie Van Kooten is a writer and editor who grew up on a farm west of Pella and loves telling stories about family life in the country. She’s married and has three sons – two of whom are out of the nest.
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