

“Somebody” Is Back to Help



Doug Rye
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Somebody is here to help you again. You know it is really not that difficult. As I write this column, I am still on the road conducting energy seminars. Still teaching folks just like you how to have lower utility bills and comfortable homes. As I help folks every single day, yes, I mean every single day, Monday through Friday at work, Saturday on the radio and even Sunday after church, it often occurs to me just how simple it really is

to solve most of your energy problems.

So why doesn't everybody implement these solutions? Sometimes it is a lack of funds, but most of the time, I believe it is simply a lack of action and a lack of awareness of some really simple steps.

In last month's column, I challenged you to prepare your energy plan. I trust that you have completed that. Please keep in mind that it might need revision as time goes along. I really wish that there was a way that I could sit down beside every one of you and read your list. I would enjoy the fellowship and no doubt become wiser for it. I have a pretty good idea, however, what issues most of you face. And I told you that I would give you more energy-saving tips this month that many of you could implement at absolutely no cost.

So here we go.

Perhaps you can relate to the following story: A recent energy audit at an older house revealed that the family had a refrigerator freezer in the kitchen, which is needed and expected. The family also had a refrigerator freezer and a large chest-type freezer in the garage. There was absolutely nothing in the refrigerator freezer except three trays of ice cubes. It was in running condition and doing a good job. The freezer had two small

boxes of popsicles. The lady of the house said these were for the grandchildren. Being a pawpaw myself, I understand the importance of that. When I explained to the family that it was costing about \$60 per month to have 36 ice cubes and 20 popsicles, it was quickly understood by all that there had to be a better way. So the lady of the house moved the popsicles to the kitchen refrigerator freezer while her husband gladly unplugged the two unused and unneeded units.

Of course, we discussed the importance of properly caring for and even more importantly, the safe disposal of these two units. Empty refrigerators or freezers can be death traps to pets or, heaven forbid, children.

Here are the facts about those extra refrigerators and freezers:

Fact 1 – Refrigerators and freezers that are 10 years old or older use at least \$1 per day on energy costs.

Fact 2 – It is very difficult for us to dispose of a refrigerator or freezer that is in perfect working order.

Fact 3 – You probably don't even need that extra refrigerator freezer, which easily costs at least \$30 a month.

(It) was costing about \$60 per month to have 36 ice cubes and 20 popsicles.

If this tip fits your situation, list it on your energy plan, get rid of it and mark it off your list. And smile when you get your next electric bill.

You know, this really isn't that difficult. Maybe somebody will help you next month, too.

Doug Rye, a licensed architect living in Saline County, Ark., and the popular host of the “Home Remedies” radio show, works as a consultant for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas to promote energy efficiency to cooperative members statewide. To order Doug's video, call Doug at 1-888-Doug-Rye. More energy-efficiency tips can also be found at www.ecark.org

Energy-Saving Tips

For first-time homeowners, those building a new home or those just wanting to make changes to an older, existing home, Doug has written some energy-saving tips for you to consider. There is no better time to do this than at the beginning of a construction project.

- In the summer your attic can reach 140 degrees, so get the ductwork out of there! This may not be practical in an older home, but if you're building a new home, insist that the ductwork is placed in conditioned space, a basement or in the crawl space.

- New or existing homes need insulation. Doug recommends

cellulose. It forms an airtight barrier and is more soundproof, insect-proof and fire resistant than conventional insulation.

- Most people, even new homeowners, have the least efficient heating and air conditioning equipment allowed under federal law. At a minimum, buy heat pumps and air conditioners with a 12 SEER (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio) rating or above.

- If you are doing the job or if you've hired a contractor, Doug offers this advice. Educate yourself! Energy efficiency won't just benefit you and your family, but our precious environment as well.

S.D. Teen Earns High National Co-op Honors

Mitchell High School student Kevin Loker was named first-runner up to an Iowa teen as the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's 2007-2008 Youth Leadership Council National Spokesperson.

Loker represented the state on the council during its meeting in July.

Loker was one of 32 students who represented 21 South Dakota electric cooperatives at the 2007 Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. While there, Loker was selected as South Dakota's delegate to NRECA's Youth Leadership Council. As a member of the YLC, he returned to Washington in July for more focused training on cooperatives, leadership and public speaking.

The conference agenda included leadership and team building exercises, meeting with Capitol

Hill staff members who are "alumni" of NRECA's Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, and a competition to select the NRECA's National Youth Spokesperson.

All 45 members of the YLC, including Loker, will participate in the 2008 NRECA Annual Meeting in Anaheim, Calif. They will provide assistance to the NRECA staff and co-op delegates; participate in the Parade of States at the opening general session and take part in a variety of educational activities.

NRECA is the national service organization representing the nation's more than 900 private, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, which provide electric service to 40 million people in 47 states.



Kevin Loker stands next to a statue of Chief Justice John Marshall at the Supreme Court during Youth Tour.

Copper Thieves Strike Again

Copper thieves are striking the state again and their criminal acts may prove deadly to themselves or others.

Copper thieves have struck communities across the state, causing thousands of dollars worth of damage to reap a few hundred dollars' worth of stolen property.

Electric cooperatives and other utilities are asking the public to be watching for suspicious activity around electrical equipment.

Copper thefts are on the upswing across the nation since the salvage price for scrap copper has risen. As these electrical thefts have increased so, too, have deaths. In July, an Ohio utility crew discovered an electrocuted man who died attempting to steal copper by cutting down power lines near Cincinnati."

According to Safe Electricity, a multi-media public awareness program designed to provide information to consumers and compliment the safety-education activities of utilities and educators, copper theft is a problem that has become an epidemic in the utility industry. Across the country, increasing incidences of copper theft are met with rising fatalities and outages to thousands of people.

"Stealing material from an electric sub-

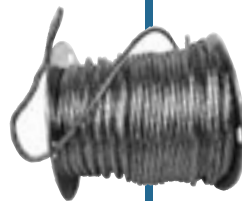
station or utility pole can cause not only serious injuries and death, but extensive outages, fires and explosions – consequences that impact innocent people," says Molly Hall, Safe Electricity Executive Director. "The minimum damage that can occur is an outage, which may affect thousands of individuals."

While specific numbers are hard to identify, news reports show more than a dozen people have died while attempting to steal copper wire.

"These deaths and damages are completely unnecessary, and they could happen anywhere," adds Hall. "People must be aware of this kind of theft and that tampering with electric power facilities can result in extremely dangerous situations. Always alert your utility provider when you see or suspect suspicious activity."

Copper theft is not harmless. Dealing with any metal and electricity is a dangerous combination, especially when it is done without permission or training, and places the thief and others in danger.

"If you think that stealing electric wire is a quick way to earn some easy money, think again," says Hall. "The value of metal is not worth losing a life.



Copper Theft Prevention Tips

Safe Electricity offers these tips to help safeguard against electrical dangers and prevent copper theft:

- Never enter or touch equipment inside a substation; stay away from power lines and anything touching a power line.
- If you notice anything unusual with electric facilities, such as an open substation gate, open equipment, hanging wire, etc. contact your electric utility immediately.
- If you see anyone around electric substations or electric facilities other than utility personnel or contractors, call the police.
- Install motion-sensor lights on the outside of your house and business to deter possible thieves.
- Store tools and wire cutters in a secure location, and never leave them out while away.
- If you work in construction, do not leave any wires unattended or leave loose wire at the job site, especially overnight. Consider hiring a night security guard.
- Help spread the word about the deadly consequences that can result from trying to steal copper.