MANAGING THE THERMOSTAT…AND YOUR COSTS

Simple steps to lower heating costs and keep you warm

Second only to family arguments about finances is the daily battle over control of the thermostat! Homes without such a conflict are usually occupied by one person. But there are ways of reaching a consensus with multiple members of the household.

If a tight budget and desire to use less energy are among your goals, the recommended thermostat setting is 68 degrees. However, a family does not have to reach that goal “cold turkey” or without some intermediate steps. Gradually adjust the thermostat setting by just one degree at a time and try it for a week. Those individual degrees may not feel like much to a person, but they will make a significant dent in your power bill.

For additional savings on your heating bill, further lower the thermostat when you are away from home, and at night while sleeping, when blankets can provide additional warmth. A programmable thermostat makes it easier by automatically lowering and raising the temperature.

Energy experts say there is a common misconception that a furnace has to work harder and use more energy when restoring heat to a home. Actually, the energy used is equal to the energy saved when the thermostat was set back. Energy is saved between the time the temperature stabilizes at the lower level and the next time heat is needed. The longer your home remains at the lower temperature, the more money is saved. The percentage of savings from setback is greater for buildings in milder climates than for those in more severe climates.

Remembering to turn down the heat need not be a challenge. Turn that job over to a programmable thermostat, an investment that will pay for itself. Standard models are relatively inexpensive, easy to install and set. There are also more sophisticated thermostats that can tie to the utility to factor in energy price as an element to usage control.

Because there are a variety of options you may want to do a little homework first. Consider charting your weekly habits including wake up and departure times, return home times, and bedtimes, and the temperatures that are comfortable during those times. This will help you decide what type of thermostat will best serve your needs.

A note of caution concerning heat pumps is they do not always work effectively with a standard programmable thermostat.

“Maintaining a moderate setting is the most cost-effective practice. Recently, however, some companies have begun selling specially designed setback thermostats for heat pumps, which make adjusting the thermostat cost effective.”

We want to emphasize that when you provide your contact information to the co-op, we will never share this information with any third parties.
Winter months can bring snow, ice, and windy conditions, which create additional hazards for drivers. Should an accident occur, it is important to be prepared. Automobile crashes always present danger, but when electricity is involved, the decisions made in the moments after the accident are especially crucial. Safe Electricity provides tips to help prepare drivers to stay safe on winter roads.

Perform regular maintenance on your car to check that batteries are charged, tires have sufficient tread, and windshield wipers are in working order. In case of an emergency, pack a kit that includes blankets, flares, a flashlight, and a window scraper.

If you are stranded in your car after an accident, watch for signs of frostbite or hypothermia. Do not stay in one position for too long, stay awake, and do not overexert yourself as this could put strain on your heart.

Due to the potential for a winter storm to bring down power lines, individuals should only venture outside if absolutely necessary. Slow down when driving in icy conditions, and always keep your eyes on the road to look out for hazardous conditions.

If you see a car in an accident with a power pole, your first instinct may be to rush toward the vehicle to offer help. Instead, stay away from the vehicle and call 911. Keep your distance from the vehicle and all electrical equipment that has been damaged. Instruct those in the car to stay inside until the power has been shut off.

If you’re in an accident yourself involving a downed power line and you must exit the vehicle because it is on fire, jump clear of it with your feet together and without touching the vehicle and ground at the same time. Keeping your feet together, shuffle or “bunny hop” to safety. Doing this will ensure that you will not have different strengths of electric current running from one foot to another.

Keep in mind that a downed line does not need to be sparking to be energized. It is best to assume all low and downed lines are energized and dangerous.

Never drive over a downed line because that could pull down the pole and other equipment, causing additional hazards. Also watch for debris near down poles and lines, as it may be energized as well, and be aware that piles of snow may be covering downed lines or potentially dangerous debris.

If you see a downed line, do not get out of your car; call 911 to have the utility notified immediately.
ICE FISHING MEMORIES

Winter on the home farm meant more time for fishing, but ice fishing of course. Summer fishing and catching bluegills was more fun than a necessity.

But Pa took ice fishing a little more seriously, as winter-caught fish became a major supplement to our meat supply. Not that ice fishing wasn’t fun, as long as you dressed for it, had more than average amount of patience, didn’t mind sitting by a smoky campfire, and could put up with nonstop storytelling. All of the above were integral parts of ice fishing when I was a kid.

Mt. Morris, between Wautoma and Wild Rose, was our favorite ice-fishing lake. It was relatively shallow, had a goodly population of northern pike along with bluegills, sunfish, bass, and perch, plus it featured a wooded area on the west side where we could build a campfire, get out of the wind, and yet still see our tip-ups (what we used to catch northern pike.)

Occasionally Pa would bring along his pan-fishing equipment with the idea of snagging a few bluegills. Sometimes they would bite, but mostly they didn’t. What we really wanted was northern pike. The bag limit was five pike per person per day. We usually did not catch our limit, for that would have been 20 fish for the four of us. But we often returned home with 10 pike, ranging from two or three pounds to five pounds or more.

Ma packed a lunch for us, and we were off to the lake for a day of fishing. We usually arrived at the lake by 10 or so, after the barn chores were finished. At noon, we found a forked stick in the brush along the shore. Then we opened our lunch pails, dug out our sandwiches, put them on the forked stick and toasted them over our smoky campfire. The sandwiches were often cheese, which would melt just a bit in the heat, or perhaps bologna, which tasted so much better when it was roasted a bit over the campfire. A crisp apple and Ma’s homemade chocolate chip cookies rounded out the noon meal.

Winter days are short, so by 4 in the afternoon it was already becoming dark as we headed for the car with our day’s catch. Back home, we cleaned the fish. The common way of preparing northern pike for cooking is to filet them, meaning you cut strips of meat away from the backbone, and skin the fish before cooking it. Pa said that wasted too much meat. Instead we scaled them, left on the skin, cut off the head, removed the entrails and then cut the fish into pieces about two inches thick, which Ma fried. To those who might complain about bones left in the fish, Pa’s answer was to eat around the bones.

Pa also pickled northern pike to preserve the meat and eat it later as a snack. The pickling process caused the unwelcome bones to disintegrate. (Excerpted from Old Farm County Cookbook, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017.)

Go to www.jerryapps.com to learn more about Jerry’s work.