



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.

Efficiency expert Bob Dickey of the EEC’s Energy Efficiency Task Force says turning your thermostat back 10 to 15 degrees for eight hours can save from 20 to 30% a year on your heating bill, about 2% for each degree lowered over an eight-hour period.

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.

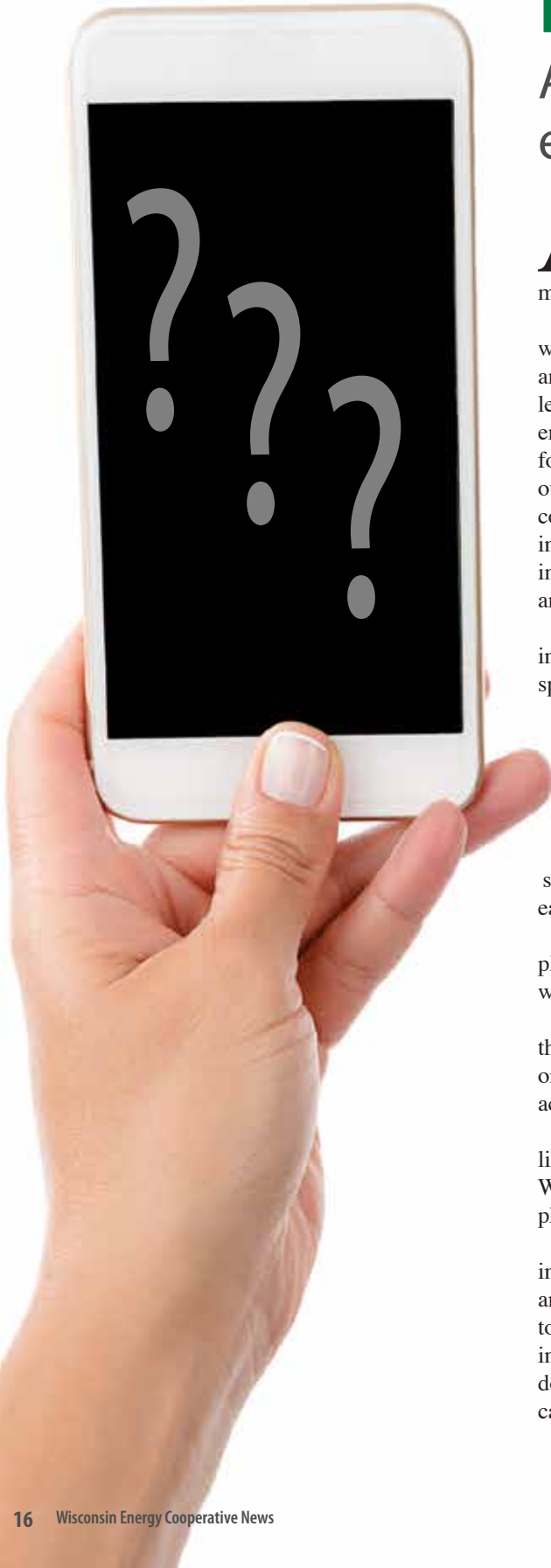
Because there are a variety of options you may want to do a little homework first. Consider charting your weekly habits including wake up and departure times, return home times, and bedtimes, and the temperatures that are comfortable during those times.

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.

“When a heat pump is in its heating mode, setting back a conventional heat pump thermostat can cause the unit to operate inefficiently, thereby canceling out any savings achieved by lowering the temperature setting,” Dickey says. “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.”

For more information about using less energy and improving comfort while saving money, visit www.EfficiencyResource.org. The online Energy Efficiency Resource Center is a service of the Energy Education Council. Learn more at www.EnergyEdCouncil.org.



KEEP US IN THE KNOW

Accurate contact information ensures better service to you

At Richland Electric Cooperative (REC), we are constantly striving to improve our operational efficiency so we can provide the most reliable electric service possible for our consumer-members (that's you!).

We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help. By making sure we have your most accurate and complete contact information, we can continue to provide the high level of service that you expect and deserve. Accurate information enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. It also allows co-op members to receive information about other important programs, events, and activities.

Up-to-date contact information can potentially speed up the power restoration process during an outage. For example,

the phone number you provide can be used to find your service location in our outage management system. This means when you call to report an outage we can match your phone number to your account location. Accurate information helps our outage management system predict the location and possible cause of an outage, making it easier for our crews to correct the problem.

While we always do our best to maintain service, we occasionally plan outages to update, repair, or replace equipment. In these instances, we call members in advance to notify them of the outage.

Keeping the co-op updated with your information also helps us when there's a question about energy use or billing. In addition, discrepancies on your account can be taken care of promptly if REC has accurate account information.

Many of you have been members of the co-op for years, and it's likely that your account information hasn't been updated for some time. We recognize that many members now use a cell phone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system.

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. It is only used by REC to send important information to you. Please take a moment to confirm or update your contact information by calling our office or visiting your SmartHub account. By doing so, you will be helping us improve service and efficiency so we can better serve you and all members of the co-op.

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STAY SAFE ON WINTER ROADS

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.]

Shannon Clark, Manager/CEO

1027 N. Jefferson St., P.O. Box 439, Richland Center, WI 53581


608-647-3173

www.rec.coop

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