



# [White River]

## GIVING BACK IS THE CO-OP WAY

BY ALAN J. MICHALEWICZ || GENERAL MANAGER || AMICH@WREA.ORG

As most of you know, cooperatives across the globe adhere to the same Seven Cooperative Principles that guide our decisions—from how we run the co-op, to how we engage with our local communities. Concern for community is the seventh principle, and it is one that all employees of White River Electric Association value year-round. But during the holiday season, concern for community seems especially important and equally as gratifying.

Electric cooperatives have a proud history of giving back. WREA's values our local non-profit organizations who benefit our community with their dedication and hard work, and proudly partners with many of them as a result. Working as a team, and in a cooperative effort, with organizations such as HopeWest, Meeker Education Foundation and the Meeker Fall Festival is what makes our small community so tight-knit and successful in reaching its philanthropic goals.

White River Electric members help us give back, too. Through Energy Outreach Colorado or the LEAP program, members can donate to help those in need pay their heating bills, right here in our community. And, as part of our WREA Annual Meeting

food drive in September, members contributed several boxes of food and supplies to the local food bank. Any contribution, whether great or small, makes a difference to those less fortunate.

Our commitment is also global. WREA has supported the efforts of NRECA International so they can help bring power to thousands of people who have never experienced the benefits of electricity. This year, WREA lineman Chris Stanworth was selected as an alternate to travel and train with the Energy Trails team whose goal was to electrify a small village in Guatemala in less than three weeks. Stanworth worked side-by-side with crews from Oklahoma and Colorado to train for the trip so that he would be prepared to serve when called. Although his role as an alternate wasn't called upon, we are proud of his success and grateful for his willingness to dedicate time, energy and knowledge to this meaningful program.

So many families go without and struggle to make ends meet. This struggle can be especially hard during the holiday season. WREA employees show their concern for



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community — our seventh cooperative principle — by voluntarily participating in the Giving Tree program as a collective group. For the past several years, WREA employees have opted to make personal donations to help purchase holiday gifts and food for participants of the program and to help

make a difference in the lives of others.

There are many ways you can give back to the community that go beyond dollar donations. Take some time to go through your closets and find clothes that no longer fit or have lost their use. Bag those items up and take them to your local clothing drives or Goodwill centers. Volunteer for a local food or toy drive, deliver meals to the sick and the elderly or simply make a meal for a neighbor in need.

No matter how great or small the act, every time we give back, we strengthen our community. Having a concern for our community benefits all of us. Thank you for partnering with White River Electric in supporting a small community we get to call “home.”



**Wishing you a Happy Holiday and a joyful New Year. Best wishes from your friends at WREA.**

# ELECTRIFY YOUR HOLIDAY GIFT LIST

Advances in electronics offer something for everyone

BY PAUL WESSLUND

Electricity doesn't just have to light your tree this Christmas. It can also power your holiday gift list.

Electric gadgets can cook, entertain, help with chores and improve your health, says Brian Sloboda, a program and product manager at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. He says electric devices will almost always get the job done more quietly, more cheaply and more efficiently.

Sloboda has a couple of tips before you head to the store or online to start shopping.

Don't always buy the cheapest. Inexpensive rechargeable batteries, for example, can catch fire. Or their charges can be limited, providing just a few minutes of use at a time. Buy from reputable companies and shop to compare prices.

Be cyber safe. Any internet-connected device can be hacked. Even security cameras and smart televisions come with a preset and lousy password. Change it. Keep the software current as updates often include security fixes. Sloboda adds, "Don't let the fear of hacking prevent you from enjoying these devices. Just be aware of what could happen and take necessary precautions."

## Here's your idea list for giving or receiving:

**For the cook.** Sous-vide is the latest kitchen trend. In French, it means "under vacuum," and it's basically a cooking technique that seals the food in a plastic bag and slow cooks it in water. "It is used by a number of restaurants," Sloboda says. "It doesn't get rid of the nutrients in the food through overcooking." Sous-vide devices come as an electric pot or, for less money, as a wand that you stick into your own pot of water with the plastic bag. And of course, there's an app for that — you can control the sous-vide cooking with your smartphone.

**For the handy person.** Electric lawn mowers, trimmers and chain saws eliminate spills and trips to the gas station, but they're not for everyone. Sloboda says professional landscapers need the power of gasoline. Rechargeable battery models are best for suburban yards where the job takes about 30 minutes. Plug-in versions have the hassle and distance limits of a cord, but are more powerful and cheaper. Another advantage is electric models are quiet and won't disturb the neighbors. With leaf blowers in particular, Sloboda says, some states are passing noise-limiting regulations. In addition, Sloboda says the types of motors in gasoline leaf blowers "put more pollutants into the air than most gas-powered cars."

**For fun.** "It's a good time to buy electronics," Sloboda says. "Televisions are getting thinner and lighter, and they're coming down in price, all because LED technology has improved." If the video games in your house are a few years old, gamers will get much better graphics with an upgrade and they will save energy because "we've seen the video game console manufacturers improve the efficiency of their products," Sloboda says.

**For outdoor activities.** Flying remote-controlled drones is popular and they're available in a range of prices. Before you buy, check battery life between recharges so you know whether your gift provides 30 minutes of fun or merely 3 minutes.



E-readers make books quickly and cheaply available, and you can even check out electronic books from your library. Virtual reality glasses or goggles not only put you right in the middle of the action in a video game, but they can also be useful for home repair — companies are starting to offer virtual reality diagnostics for their products that can show details like which way to turn the wrench to fix a problem.

**For health.** Smart watches and wrist bands not only keep track of how far you walk each day, but can also appeal to your competitive streak by choosing a virtual walking or running mate. A wide range of power scooters are available for fun or for commuting and some even have pedals to supplement the motor, so you can get a bit of exercise, too. Be aware that good motorized bikes and scooters are expensive.

**For the home.** Amazon's Alexa and Echo as well as other smart speakers are getting popular, but Sloboda says they're not being used to their full potential yet. Most people just ask their speaker to play music or give a weather report. Companies are working on addressing privacy concerns — smart speakers are listening all the time — but Sloboda says solving security questions would open up uses like home banking and controlling appliances with a voice command.

To recharge all your devices, you can choose options like smart power strips that avoid continuing to use electricity after a device is fully charged, or portable block chargers to extend your phone's battery life while traveling. Sloboda advises against wireless charging devices because they use a lot of electricity to operate.

**For your pet.** Electronics will feed and water pets while you're away, shoot tennis balls for your dog to fetch, and monitor their health. Cameras can also keep track of what they're up to when you leave. "I aimed one of my security cameras at my dog," Sloboda says. "Now I always push the chairs up to the dining table before I leave, otherwise within 5 minutes our dog is standing in the middle of the table looking for anything he can chew on."

**For variety.** Sloboda also advises supplementing all the electronic gifts with a good old-fashioned football or basketball.

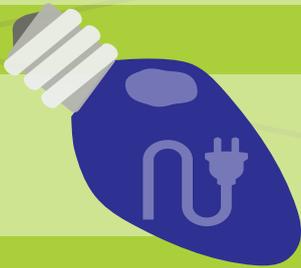
*Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

# Holiday LIGHTING Safety

Use only holiday lights that have been safety tested and have the **UL label**.



Before using, **check each strand** for broken sockets, frayed cords, or faulty plugs.



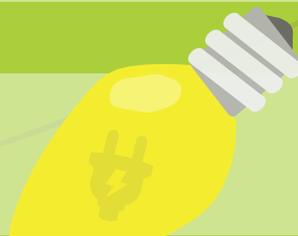
Don't string together more than **three** standard-sized incandescent sets of lights or you could **overload the circuit**.



**Don't throw lights** over tree branches that are **near power lines** and service connections.



**Always unplug lights before** leaving your home or going to bed; a timer can help with this.



## Pet Safety During the Holidays and Beyond

The holiday season presents a plethora of hazards for pets that go beyond too much catnip or too many gourmet doggie treats.

Christmas lights, decorations and presents under the tree all create opportunities for your furry friend to get hurt. Your dog or cat could start with the gift of chocolates under the tree (a no-no for pets), or get tangled in light strands and make a run for it, causing holiday chaos. And your puppy could be in for a shock if she decides cords or light strands are meant for her gnawing pleasure.

So, to keep your pets safe, follow these precautions suggested by Safe Electricity during the holidays and throughout the year:

- Charging cords left plugged in but not in use are tempting for pets. Unplug cords and put them away while not in use. Doing so saves energy as well.
- Do not let your pets nap by or behind warm computer equipment or any other electrical devices. While it might make a cozy spot, it could cause trouble for your pet.
- Don't leave your pets unattended around burn hazards, such as a hair straightener, portable heater or a hot outdoor grill. Pets can easily burn themselves. (Any heating appliance, but especially a space heater, should never be left unattended.)
- If your pet swallows a gadget, such as a chewed-up cell phone or other electronic parts, call your vet or pet hospital right away. It could cause a digestive blockage. In addition, the contents of many tech-savvy or electronic devices are toxic.
- If your pet lives outdoors, bring it inside during thunderstorms. Outdoor dogs kept in cages or on chains are more susceptible to lightning strikes due their close proximity to metal.

For more information on electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

## WRAPPED IN SAFETY

After you pull out that electric blanket for its first use of the season, give it a good inspection. Be sure the wiring is snug and free of damage and discoloration.

If you're unsure of its safety, discard your electric blanket and snuggle up to a new, UL-certified one you'll love for winters to come.





## Show You Care With Safety Minded Gifts

As you create your holiday gift list this year, consider adding safety-minded gifts as a way to show you care. From a smart doorbell to a smoke detector, a gift that keeps loved ones safe gives peace of mind and could help save lives.

White River Electric offers the following tips and gift ideas to help keep everyone on your gift list safer this holiday season and throughout the year:

### For adults:

- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- A flashlight with extra batteries for emergencies
- A roadside emergency kit
- Reflective clothing for runners or walkers
- Gloves with LED lights or hand-held “knuckle lights” designed for runners
- A smart doorbell to see who’s at the door while at home and away
- Gift certificates for home services (home maintenance, such as HVAC inspection or chimney sweeping)
- A fire extinguisher for the kitchen
- A pack of GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlets and a gift certificate for a qualified electrician to install them
- A cozy bed blanket to replace an older electric blanket; those more than 10 years old are often unsafe

- Aftermarket safety systems for cars that don’t have them, which include features such as forward-collision and lane-departure warnings
- For vehicles not equipped with them, a rear-view camera and dash cam
- A pet harness for use in a vehicle; make sure it earned crash-test certification

### For kids:

- Buy age appropriate gifts (see recommendations on box or toy); children younger than age 3 should not have access to toys with small parts
- Also avoid marbles and small balls for small children
- Don’t forget proper safety gear, such as helmets and knee and elbow pads, when gifting scooters, roller blades, bikes and other riding toys.
- Many gaming consoles are equipped with internet browsers and chat features that allow players to communicate with each other, so be aware of these capabilities in any game or electronic device

For other safety tips and information, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Heading out of town for the holidays? Remember to unplug electronics that draw a phantom energy load. Some gadgets like televisions, gaming consoles, chargers and DVD players use energy when plugged into an outlet, even when they’re not in use.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



## Fireplace Fundamentals

It’s nice to nestle by a fire during the cold holiday season. After your fire is completely out, be sure to close the damper. This prevents heat from escaping and cold from entering through your chimney.