

WHITE RIVER ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2019



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White River Electric Association, Inc., strives

to provide its member-consumers with safe, reliable and responsible electric energy and other services at the most reasonable costs possible while remaining committed to customer and community service.

You're In Good Company With Co-ops

Neighbors helping neighbors to create a better world

BY ALAN MICHALEWICZ GENERAL MANAGER

A fair question people often ask is, “What’s in it for me?” This makes sense, as we all need to act in our own self-interest every now and then. The cool thing about co-ops is we answer the question, “What’s in it for me?” with, “This is what’s in it for we.”

When the market refuses to offer goods or services, or does so at such a high price, co-ops step in to fill the void. Cooperatives identify members of the community who have the same self-interests and bring them together to make a cooperative decision.

In 1945, when White River Electric Association got started, the folks in our community shared at least one self-interest: they wanted electricity. In fact, many Americans who lived in rural parts of the country needed electricity, which is why electric cooperatives were formed. Individuals acted in their own self-interest, but that self-interest led to the community and economic development of the rural areas in which they lived. Today, rural electric co-ops serve over 42 million people in 47 states.

It is good to know that your friends and neighbors are also co-owners of White River Electric. People coming together to meet a particular need is at the heart of every co-op and it makes us stronger. Local credit unions bring financial services to people who banks do not want to serve. In urban areas and college communities, housing co-ops offer people a safe, reliable and affordable place to live.



ALAN MICHALEWICZ

Many agricultural co-ops started as a way to get their products to market, whether it was oranges (Sunkist), dairy (Land O’Lakes), grapes (Welch’s), organic milk (Organic Valley) or any of the hundreds of other food products that co-ops bring to our table every day.

Many people who owned small businesses realized they too had a common self-interest: stay in business. So they formed purchasing co-ops like Ace Hardware and True Value so they could compete with big box stores like Home Depot and Lowe’s.

Today it is estimated that more than 40 percent of all residents in the United States are members of at least one co-op. Worldwide, well over a billion people are counted as co-op members.

Every time you turn on (or off) the lights, it can serve as a reminder that, as a member of WREA, you are also a co-owner. My hope is that 2019 will bring each of you a renewed sense of community and cooperation as we look forward to another successful year — together.

When Winter Winds Howl, Power Lines Can Gallop

Severe weather with strong winds can cause damage to trees, buildings and electrical equipment. Power lines can sway in high winds, but add freezing rain or icy conditions and the result can be galloping power lines.

Galloping is the bouncing or bucking movement of overhead lines and can cause several problems, such as temporary power interruptions, equipment damage, the collapse of power poles and downed lines.

Galloping lines often result from ice buildup on one side of the power line due to strong winds. The buildup of ice creates an airfoil, which changes the flow of air around the line, causing bouncing wires, or galloping power lines.

There isn't much utility workers can do until the wind dies down. That's why many power lines have objects like twisted wire or round or angular pieces of metal attached to



the line. These help reduce galloping of lines and prevent potential danger.

If you see galloping power lines:

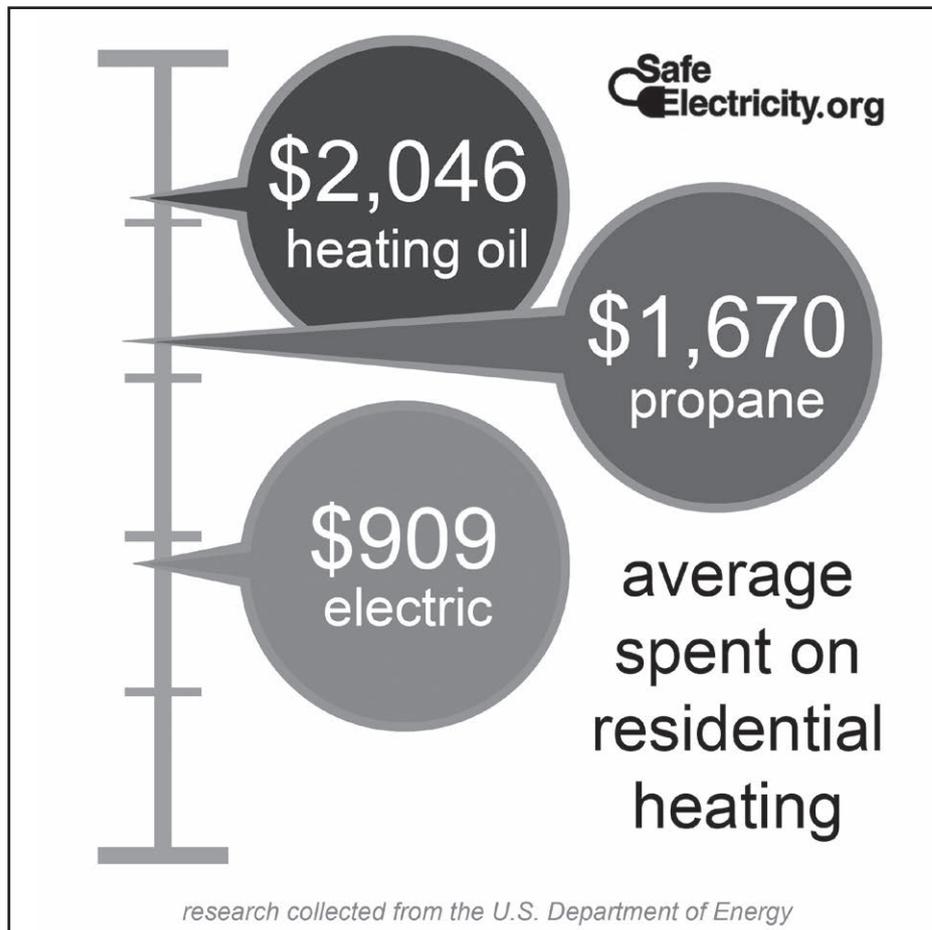
- Keep your distance — ice can break off or power lines can break loose.
- Contact us at White River Electric at 970-878-5041 to make us aware of the potential damage as soon as possible.

If you see a downed line:

- Stay far away and warn others to stay away, too.
- Remember, a downed line can remain energized even if it is not sparking or arcing.
- Always report the location of a downed power line and damaged electrical equipment.

Be sure to have a storm preparedness kit ready before a storm strikes to help get you and your family through a power outage. This kit should include bottled water, nonperishable food, blankets, warm clothing, first aid kit and medicine, flashlight, radio, extra batteries and toiletries.

To learn more about storm and outage safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



January 2019
Energy Efficiency
 Tip of the Month

HOT WATER TANK TIP

Is your hot water tank warm to the touch? Consider insulating it to save 7 to 16 percent annually on water heating costs. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations.

Source: energy.gov

An Outlet for Energy Savings

BY KALEY LOCKWOOD

◀ ThinkEco offers smart, energy-saving outlets. Shown here is the modlet (or modern outlet), which can be controlled remotely and adjusted to your personal schedule. Photo credit: ThinkEco.

Does the ebb and flow of your energy bill have you searching for an affordable way to reduce or better control your use? If you answered yes, then look no further because we're taking a quick dive into a practical and affordable device that allows you to better manage your home's energy use: energy-saving outlets.

These next-generation devices afford the same surge protection as their predecessors, but also tie in the "smart" functionality of an internet-connected device.

There are several different kinds of energy-saving outlets available, but there are two factors you should consider. First is size; there are many different sizes ranging from a single external outlet to a power strip with multiple sockets. The second thing you want to consider is Wi-Fi connectivity; internet-connected outlets, commonly known as smart plugs, may enable you to fully realize the potential of the energy savings. This is because you have greater remote control of the outlet through your smartphone, tablet or home assistant (like Google Home or Amazon's Alexa).

You also want to consider where you will use the energy-saving outlet and what you will use it for. Answering these questions will make it easier to choose the device that works best for you.

With smart plugs or smart power strips, a few clicks and swipes on your smartphone will allow you to fully shut down the electrical current to your high-powered devices to prevent them from consuming electricity even when switched off. Several devices found inside your home are commonly referred to as "parasitic loads," "phantom loads" or "energy vampires." In fact, most entertainment systems consist of several parasitic loads, such as televisions, DVD players and video gaming consoles. These outlets can potentially curb these loads, which can cost the average household an extra \$200 per year.

In addition to preventing unnecessary energy consumption, these energy-saving outlets are affordable for most folks who are looking to trim their use. The average smart outlet costs around \$10 to \$20 on Amazon.com and has the potential to pay for itself within two years or less, depending on how often you use it.

As previously noted, convenience is a major factor to consider when thinking about your next efficiency upgrade. Smart plugs typically come with simple instructions to download an accompanying app on your smartphone and then connect the plug to your home's Wi-Fi. The convenience in the ability to turn the device on and off using your phone cannot be overstated.

Advanced smart plugs and smart plug apps also have the capability to automate the use with your schedule and even your presence in the home.

You can also have large-load devices turn off at a set time each night and turn on every morning when you're ready to use them. If you want to use your television, for example, at a time that's outside of the preset hours, you can easily switch the device on through the smartphone app. Through automation, you can power down these energy-intensive devices and prevent unnecessary energy use.

For those looking to optimize their energy use and eliminate vampire loads, smart plugs may be the best option. For others who want more of a hands-off option to save additional dollars, energy-saving outlets and power strips without the Wi-Fi connection may be a better choice.

Either way, energy-saving outlets are just one of many energy efficient options out there and, as technology continues to evolve, we'll likely see additional options emerge in the future.

Kaley Lockwood writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Cheap Electronic Chargers Spell Trouble

The chargers that came with our phone, digital camera or other electronics seem to disappear. As a solution, many people reach for the low-cost, generic plug-in USB chargers and charging cables found in the sea of impulse items that flank the checkout line at your favorite drug, convenience or big-box store. They're also popular items on numerous online shopping sites and cheaper than dishing out money to replace them with their original maker's versions.

"It can save money and it's so convenient," you rationalize. Without much more thought, you place them in the virtual cart or on the checkout counter.

Inexpensive charging components may be one area you where don't want to cut corners, however, and for a variety of reasons. Amazon recalled 26,000 AmazonBasics portable lithium-ion battery chargers and power banks after the massive online retailer learned the units can over-heat and ignite, causing fire and burn hazards. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the products were sold between December 2014 and July 2017.

Along with being a potential fire hazard, using cheaply made charging components and devices can also cause electrocution. Dangers aside, they may cost you more in the long run since they can cause damage to whatever's on the other end of the cable.

To keep safe around electrical devices and charging gear, Safe Electricity recommends the following:

- Do not leave items that are charging unattended.
- Always keep charging items away from flammable objects, especially bedding, and do not take them to bed with you. Tell kids and teens to never place a charging device under their pillow. The heat generated cannot dissipate and the charger will become hotter and hotter, according to the Newton, New Hampshire, Fire Department. This could lead to the pillow or bed catching fire.
- Do not touch charging electronic devices with wet hands or while standing in water.
- Make sure charging components are certified by a reputable third-party testing laboratory.



- Only buy product-approved chargers and cables (those made or certified by the manufacturer). Using cheaper devices can cause damage to the USB charge chip. Although it's tempting to save money, this can have a lasting impact on how quickly and effectively your device charges in the future.

The bottom line: Don't buy charging equipment with prices that seem too good to be true or from companies you never heard of. Even if you have heard of the company, be leery of fakes. In 2016, Apple sued a company that sold counterfeit wall chargers with Apple's name on them for less than \$10 each.

Say yes to the Milky Way candy bar in the checkout line or to the online Kindle book and no to cheap chargers.

A winter scene with a snowflake warning sign in the foreground. The background shows a snowy landscape with bare trees. A dark text box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Wait Out the Weather
Unless it's an emergency, stay home during ice and snow storms, and wait until roads are passable. Heavy snow and ice can bring down power lines, creating hazardous conditions.