

WHITE RIVER ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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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.

Considering Solar? We're Here to Help

BY ALAN MICHALEWICZ GENERAL MANAGER

Today's consumers want and expect options, including the type of energy powering their homes. Many homeowners are looking for a less expensive form of energy with ongoing savings. Some are looking for a renewable energy source. These two motives are why many homeowners explore rooftop solar panels.

The interest in alternative energy sources is being fueled by decreasing costs for rooftop solar, the availability of financial incentives and the proliferation of companies offering solar panel installation. However, as attractive and popular as rooftop solar may appear, it is important for consumers to fully understand its true costs, the operational reality of this form of energy and actual energy savings. To determine whether rooftop solar is right for their situation, homeowners must execute due diligence.

White River Electric Association is always striving to find ways to meet the needs and desires of our consumer-members, without breaking the bank. In January, we celebrated completion of the Piceance Creek Solar Project, which will allow WREA members in specific rate classes to participate in a renewable program and purchase blocks of energy. The program is scheduled to kick-off in May. Together, with Cypress Creek Renewables (CCR), WREA formulated a plan to purchase 100 percent of the power generated by the CCR-owned facility and allow WREA consumer-members to benefit from the purchase of that solar power.

Because installing rooftop solar can be costly, this is a win-win for WREA consumer-members interested in supporting renewable energy. After all, we all have a



ALAN MICHALEWICZ

different "bottom line" that impacts our success. For WREA, our success is your success. We continually strive to find new ways to help you use energy more efficiently, and at a cost that makes your pocketbook happy.

White River Electric is also seeking to keep pace with the changing energy environment and evolving technology. We have enhanced our member usage tracking capabilities by exploring more options that will help you manage your energy use, such as the "Analyze My Usage" feature on SmartHub (our online bill-pay portal) and by installing our "smart" advanced metering infrastructure meters. Because the AMI meters "read" daily, WREA staff can help you determine what might be the culprit of high energy use should you have questions about your monthly bill. By submitting a daily reading, the smart meters allow WREA staff to determine if colder weather or a house full of company might have been a factor in high energy use for a specific time period.

White River Electric recognizes that consumer interest in renewable energy sources and renewables is at an all-time high, and we stand ready to answer questions if members wish to pursue solar options at home.

Unlike a solar company that has one objective — to sell its products and services — we can help members look at

CONSIDERING SOLAR?

the total energy picture and determine the best options for you. While rooftop solar certainly works for many people, it's not the answer for all. Taking into account current energy consumption, the home "envelope," age and efficiency of the heating and cooling system and home site, consumer-members will have to determine whether rooftop solar is the best choice given the homeowners' objectives. It's important to gain perspective on the total energy puzzle before making a decision.

As WREA continues to move to the future with the ever-changing energy market, we will continue to consider our members' needs and desires with our evolution so that we can best serve you — our consumer-members.



Programmable Lighting Options

BY BRIAN SLOBODA

In the past, the ability to easily control lights within the home was fairly rudimentary. You flipped a switch on or off. Perhaps you had a dimmer switch. To turn lights on when you were on vacation, you plugged a lamp into a gadget with a dial and it turned the lamp on and off. Today, consumers have more options than ever before.

The growing use of LED bulbs and the proliferation of smartphones and Wi-Fi brought lighting options to a new level. In addition to using less energy, many LEDs can be controlled from a smartphone app, making the LED more of a consumer electronic than a lightbulb.

When shopping for new LEDs, you essentially have two options:

A less expensive LED still offers longer life, lower energy use and will work for most fixtures. However, consumers with older dimmer switches often find that they must replace them with switches that work with newer LEDs.

The second and more expensive option is a "connected" LED. These LEDs offer features like controlling lights remotely from a smartphone app or via voice control through an in-home speaker. They can also be connected to a home security system or dimmed to enhance entertaining.

Connected LEDs require a central controller or hub, like Amazon's Alexa or the Apple HomeKit. The hub can control other smart devices and become the center of a smart home system.

Consumers can choose from a variety of manufacturers when purchasing connected LEDs. Some bulbs are compatible with different hubs or systems, but if you're planning a major overhaul to your home lighting, it's best to buy one brand and stick with it.

Smart lighting options aren't necessarily about saving energy, but if they can help you remember to turn the light off when you are not in a room, then a small amount of energy savings can be achieved.

As technology continues to advance, more smart home products will become available. Many of these products will include features that focus on home security and quality of life.

If you're interested in smart technologies for your home, the key will be to research your options and understand how the system works with the other devices within your home.

Brian Sloboda is a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



March 2019

Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

A/C TIP:

Spring is nearly here! Now is the perfect time to test your A/C and ensure it's ready for summer. Remember to check the evaporator coil, which should be cleaned annually for optimal efficiency.

Source: energy.gov



WHITE RIVER ELECTRIC OPENS NEW SOLAR FARM

WREA celebrates the grand opening of the Piceance Creek Solar Farm with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

White River Electric Association and Cypress Creek Renewables (CCR) were proud to celebrate the grand opening of Piceance Creek Solar Farm with a ribbon-cutting on January 22. The Piceance Creek Solar Farm is a 5.4-megawatt solar power system designed to provide over 10,000,000 kilowatt-hours per year to WREA.

“The Piceance Creek Solar facility is Cypress Creek Renewables’ first commissioned site in Colorado and exemplifies the complimentary nature of solar energy production adjacent to natural gas operations,” said Michelle Zimmerman, project developer for CCR.

The 40-acre site consists of 16,959 solar modules mounted on a single-axis tracking system designed to track the sun from east to west each day, maximizing the facility’s production. This project produces enough energy to power over 830 single family homes each year. This is WREA’s third local renewable project.

“All of the projects meet our goal of developing cost-effective, local renewable energy,” said Trina Zagar-Brown, general counsel and manager of member services with WREA.

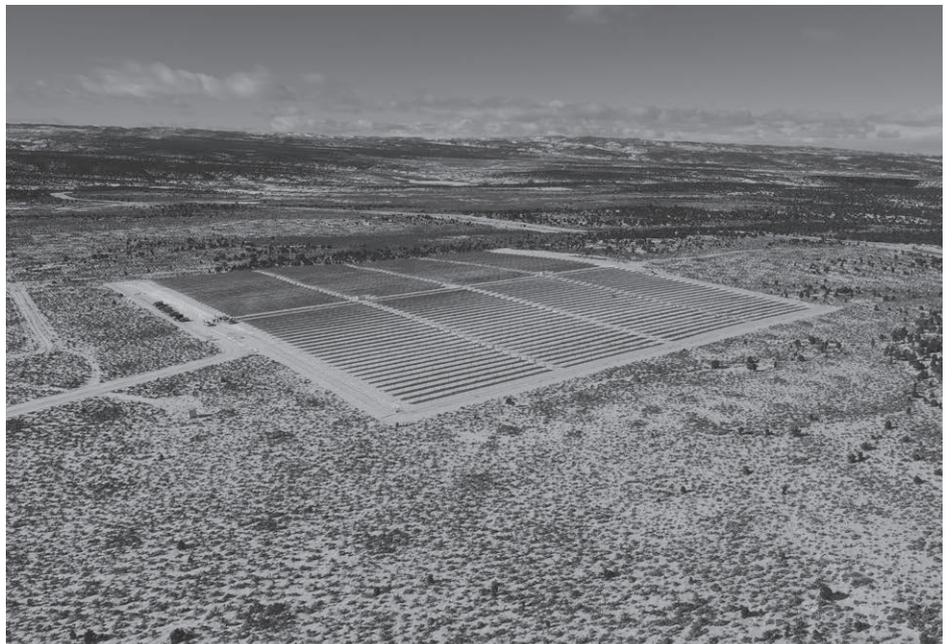
Piceance Creek Solar is currently the largest utility scale solar project in north-western Colorado.

Zagar-Brown went on to state that, “WREA is fortunate to be located in an area filled with diverse and abundant natural energy resources including gas, coal, solar and hydro. WREA’s local renewables aren’t about trendy efforts, but are projects that are designed to have a positive impact on our community and our rates.”

WREA members will have opportunities to lease power from the Piceance Creek

Solar Farm beginning in May. WREA also worked with the Meeker Housing Authority and Northwest Colorado Council of Governments to develop the Meeker Housing Solar Project, whereby a NWCOG grant will be used to purchase solar energy from Piceance Creek Solar to benefit the Meeker Housing Authority facilities.

Aerial shot of the Piceance Creek Solar Farm site.





Three Easy DIY Home Efficiency Projects

Winter weather can have a big impact on your energy bills and pocketbook. Now that spring is just around the corner, it's the perfect time to tackle a few DIY efficiency projects for your home. The good news: You don't have to be an energy expert to do this.

There are several easy ways to save energy, but if you're willing to take a hands-on approach, here are three projects you can do now to start saving.

Make the most of your water heater

Start with one of the easiest projects: insulating your water heater. Insulating a water heater can save 7 to 16 percent annually on your water heating bills. If your water heater is new, it is likely already insulated, but if your water heater is warm to the touch, it needs additional insulation.

You can purchase a pre-cut jacket or blanket for about \$20. You'll also need two people for this project. Before you start, turn off the water heater. Wrap the blanket around the water heater and tape it to temporarily keep it in place. If necessary, use a marker to note the areas where the controls are so you can cut them out. Once the blanket is positioned correctly, tape it permanently in place and then turn the water heater back on. If you

have an electric water heater, do not set the thermostat above 130 degrees, as it can cause overheating. Setting it at 120 degrees will save on heating costs.

Seal air leaks with caulk

The average American family spends \$2,000 annually on energy bills. Unfortunately, much of that money is wasted through air leaks in the home. Applying caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring and plumbing saves energy and money. There are many different types of caulking compounds available, but the most popular choice is silicone. Silicone caulk is waterproof and flexible and won't shrink or crack.

Before applying new caulk, clean and remove any old caulk or paint with a putty knife, screwdriver, brush or solvent. The area should be dry before you apply the new caulk.

Apply the caulk in one continuous stream and make sure it sticks to both sides of the crack or seam. Afterward, use a putty knife to smooth out the caulk, then wipe the surface with a dry cloth.

Weather strip exterior doors

One of the best ways to seal air leaks is to weather strip exterior doors, which keeps

out drafts and helps you control energy costs. Weather stripping materials vary, so ask your local hardware or home store for assistance if you're unsure about the supplies you need.

When choosing weather stripping materials, make sure it can withstand temperature changes, friction and general wear and tear for the location of the door. Keep in mind, you will need separate materials for the door sweep (at the bottom of the door) and the top and sides.

Before applying the new weather stripping, clean the moldings with water and soap, then let the area dry completely. Measure each side of the door, then cut the weather stripping to fit each section. Make sure the weather stripping fits snugly against both surfaces so it compresses when the door is closed.

By completing these simple efficiency projects, you can save energy while increasing the comfort level of your home and impress your family and friends with your savvy energy-saving skills.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.