



The economy. Saving energy. Climate change. All the things  
**YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT**  
—— we're already working out. ——

At your electric co-op, we don't simply send electricity to your home. We look out for you and your entire community. And we do so for a very simple reason—it's our community too. That's why we are always working to keep the lights on and our costs down. Because we pay the same bills you pay. Your hometown is our hometown. And together, we can't go wrong.



**Rock Energy Cooperative**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

*Looking out for you.*



By Shane L. Larson,  
Chief Executive Officer

## More Power To You

**T**his month I want to talk to our members directly regarding the current debate about Rock Energy Cooperative's payment and disconnection policies.

Rock Energy Cooperative voluntarily follows the state's cold weather disconnection moratorium. Simply put, any member who was previously in good standing, but falls behind on their bill in the winter, is not disconnected for non-payment between December 1 and March 31.

There are three exceptions to this policy that we occasionally face: when a member defaults on a payment agreement for an account that was already delinquent; when somebody uses electricity without ever signing up for service (which most commonly occurs at rental properties); or when somebody tampers with the electric system to bypass their electric meters (an extremely dangerous practice that can lead to fires and even death).

Since mid-December, the cooperative has used a device called a load limiter rather than disconnecting in these situations, so people will have at least some electricity to run essential devices.

We never want to see a situation get to that point, and it rarely does. The defining characteristic of Rock Energy is a part of our name: cooperative. We are dedicated to serving our members and the community, but our endeavor is a cooperative one. Our strength and success come from folks working together to accomplish the shared goals of keeping the lights on and the natural gas flowing.

Cooperation requires communication, so please let us know when you have a problem so we can work together to resolve it. If you're concerned that you might not be able to pay your bill, the worst thing you can do is nothing! Give us a call and talk to us about your situation.

We can't make bills go away, but we'll do everything we can to figure out a solution.

Both Wisconsin and Illinois operate energy assistance programs, and many faith and community groups also stand ready to help those in need. We maintain a list of contact numbers for local energy assistance programs and will gladly provide that information to any member who requests it.

Just like each of our members, REC gets an electric bill and a gas bill each month — the only difference between yours and ours is the number of zeros to the left of the decimal point. When members don't pay their bills, that shortfall doesn't come out of the pockets of Wall

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***When members don't pay their bills, that shortfall doesn't come out of the pockets of Wall Street investors in far away places; it comes out of the pockets of every active REC member.***

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Street investors in far away places; it comes out of the pockets of every active REC member. Through October of 2008, bad debt from former members amounts to roughly \$32 for each and every gas and electric meter on our system (that's approximately 26,000 total meters totaling \$826,000; compare that with \$4.16 per meter totaling \$29,000 in October 2006).

Statistics like that illustrate why it is so important for Rock

Energy Cooperative to act as good stewards of your resources. We understand that every action we take can have a direct impact on your family budget. That's why we work so hard to keep reliability high and costs as low as possible. In fact, the average residential REC member using 900 kilowatt hours of electricity per month pays \$4 less per month than Alliant WP&L customers, and \$10 less per month than ComEd customers (taxes excluded).

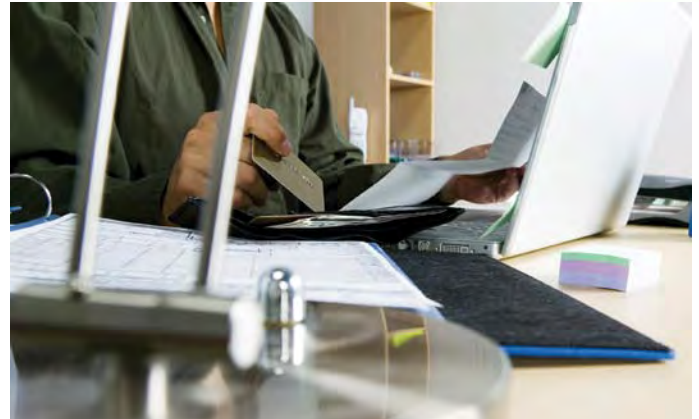
We understand that times are tough for a lot of people right now. Rock Energy Cooperative was established to improve our community and enhance the lives of folks in our area. If we communicate and cooperate, very few challenges will stand in our way.

We truly appreciate the opportunity to serve your energy needs. If we can do any thing to improve our service to you, please let us know. ■



**R**ock Energy members are often surprised when they open their January electric bill. Your January electric bill may be high because:

- Your indoor and outdoor holiday lights, displays, and decorations were powered by electricity. To help cut down on your holiday lighting costs for next year, stock up on the new energy-saving Light Emitting Diode (LED) lights when you shop for next year.
- Christmas often involves a lot of extra cooking and baking, which requires extra electricity.
- Shorter days and longer nights mean the lights stay on longer, both inside and out. You can help cut down on this cost by switching your standard incandescent light bulbs with energy-saving compact fluorescent lights.
- With colder temperatures, space heaters are often used in garages, basements, and other places to provide warmth and comfort. For both safety and economy, be sure to use them only when and where they are needed.
- Holiday houseguests often mean more hot water for showers, laundry, and dishwashing, and also more heating and lighting in guest rooms.
- Even if you don't have electric heat, most heating systems use electricity to power fans and other functions. Help keep your heating system operating efficiently by changing the filter regularly.
- You may be using engine block heaters on vehicles and farm equipment. Timers can help save energy in the winter. Also, be sure they're working properly and that you're not setting them at too high a setting. ■



## **Budget Billing for Residential Members**

**T**ired of your electric bill going up and down? Sign up for our Budget Billing program and make your bills more predictable and easier to handle from month to month.

With the Budget Billing plan, the seasonal fluctuations over the year are leveled out, allowing you to pay a set amount for 11 months of the year.

Payments are based on an average of your previous year's usage (members must have been on our service for 6 months previous to begin participating). Reconciliation every six months will determine if we have overestimated or underestimated your usage and billing.

If you wish to be on the Budget Billing plan, you're a residential member, your account is current, and you have a good credit history, please call the office. ■

## **Energy Assistance**

Federal and state funded bill paying assistance programs for families that need help with their energy bills are now open in Illinois. Applications and complete details are available through your county government offices. To find out which office covers your area, please contact:

**Call 1-877-411-9276 or 1-217-785-6135 or visit:**  
<http://www.illinoisliheap.com/>

# **Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

Often called the “Silent Killer” because of its odorless, tasteless, and colorless nature, carbon monoxide remains the leading cause of accidental poisonings in the United States. Each year CO poisoning claims nearly 500 lives and causes more than 15,000 visits to hospital emergency departments. During winter months, incidents of poisoning increase due to the use of heating equipment. With that in mind, help prevent CO poisoning by installing and maintaining a CO detector.

CO can be found in combustion fumes, such as those produced by cars and trucks, other small gasoline engines, stoves, lanterns, coal / wood-burning units, and gas ranges and heating systems. CO can build up in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces. Many people rely on portable electric generators during power outages, for example; it is vital that these units not be used improperly.

Noticeable signs that signal a CO problem: streaks of carbon or soot around the service door of your fuel-burning appliance; the absence of a draft in your chimney; excessive rusting on flue pipes; moisture collecting on the windows and walls of furnace rooms; fallen soot from the fireplace; small amounts of water leaking from the base of the chimney, vent, or flue pipe; damaged or discolored bricks at the top of your chimney; rust on the portion of the vent pipe visible from outside your home.

The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headaches, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. High levels of CO inhalation may lead to loss of consciousness and can even

be fatal. Unless suspected, CO poisoning can be difficult to diagnose because the symptoms mimic other illnesses, like the flu.

If your CO alarm sounds, immediately open doors and windows for ventilation. If anyone is experiencing symptoms, evacuate the area and call 911. If the alarm sounds and no one is experiencing symptoms, continue to ventilate the house, and turn off fuel-burning appliances until the problem can be identified.

- Have a qualified technician inspect fuel-burning appliances at the beginning of every heating season.
- Make certain that flues and chimneys are connected and in good condition, and not blocked.
- Install CO detectors outside bedrooms as most poisonings occur while sleeping.
- Test your CO detectors often (at least monthly, weekly if battery powered).
- Never use charcoal grills inside homes, tents, or campers; or charcoal briquettes in a fireplace.
- Never idle cars in an enclosed garage.
- Whenever possible, choose appliances that vent outside.
- Never use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.
- Do not sleep in a room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater. ■

## **REC is Looking For Co-op Youth Day Representatives**

If you'd like to visit Washington, D.C., June 12–18, 2009, as our representative to the Co-op Youth Day Conference, we need to hear from you soon. This year, we will fully sponsor two current high school juniors who want to learn firsthand how our government and co-ops work. In addition, you'll be able to tour the capital and meet your elected representatives. To be eligible, you must write us a letter telling us why we should select you as our representative and get it to us by April 1, 2009. Please visit [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop) or call Member Relations at 608-752-4550 or 866-752-4550 for complete details. ■

## **Youth Leadership Conference July 15-17, 2009**

If you'll be a sophomore, junior, or senior in the fall but don't want to wait until then to begin identifying and developing your leadership skills, we have an opportunity for you. The Wisconsin Energy Cooperative Association's 46th Annual Youth Leadership Congress will be held July 15–17, 2009, at UW–River Falls. The three-day program is jammed with fun, hands-on activities and seminars led by topnotch professionals from many disciplines. If you're interested in being a sponsored representative of REC this year, please contact Marty Berg, Member Relations, at 608-752-4550 or by e-mail to: [martyb@rock.coop](mailto:martyb@rock.coop). ■

# Get Connected

Check out these great deals offered with your Co-op Connections Card



## BUILDING BLOCKS for Learning

**Building Blocks for Learning – Janesville, WI – 608-758-8901**

The preeminent children's educational resource center where you will find a premium selection of education and school supplies; teacher resource materials, as well as educational games, toys & puzzles for the child in your life. **Volume Discount, 4th Saturday Sale** (in store only), **Complimentary Gift Wrap, Free Local Delivery & Free Assembly** (in store only), **Shipment of Product to 3rd party, Special Orders, Gift Cards, Laminating Service** (in store only), **Activity Room** (in store only), **Play Area** (in store only) and **The Learning Academy**: "We Make Learning Fun" is our mission... The Learning Academy is a way to promote and influence educational growth and development for both parents and children in fun and inspiring ways. **\$5 Off purchase of \$30 or more**

**Anytime Fitness – Beloit / 608-363-9999 & Roscoe / 815-623-8900**

Geared up with the essential elements of a great workout... state-of-the-art strength training equipment and cutting edge cardiovascular equipment; plus, our clubs are scrupulously clean with a friendly supportive atmosphere... each new member receives a free personal fitness orientation and a safe, effective exercise program.



**Free Enrollment**

**Agard & Lipker Dental – Milton – 608-868-4444**



The best family oriented dental team in Southern Wisconsin. We offer all aspects of oral care from whitening (Zoom Whitening System) and cosmetic dentistry (IPS Empress Veneers) to child care & emergency services.

Agard & Lipker Dental is the oldest family dental practice in Janesville dating back to 1951 and still delivering excellent, personal, and integrity driven care. Drs. Agard and Lipker provide a wide variety of services: including crowns, bridges, dentures & root canals... all provided in a caring and gentle manner, with a strong commitment to quality dentistry, our patients and the community.

**5% Off (may not be combined with other discounts)**

**Angela's Attic – South Beloit, IL – 815-389-1679**

A 30,000 square foot historic factory lovingly converted into large rooms of antiques and collectibles...over 100 dealers... unique gifts, home décor, furniture of all kinds, primitives, jewelry, Fenton Glass, Depression Glass, WWII Memorabilia and much, much more... stop in, explore, sit down and have a cup of coffee and snack on a cookie or two... just 1 mile west of I-90 at Exit #1.



**10% Discount on purchase of \$20 or more** (Cash/Check only; prices not marked "Firm" or "Sale")

**Kid SPOT Tumbling – Roscoe, IL – 815-623-5437**



Providing innovative tumbling programs for the entire family, promoting gymnastics & tumbling... cheer and dance along with great special events – birthday parties, Super Saturday & family play night... offering Cheer, Tumbling and Dance competitive teams... All-Star Competitive Cheer

is the fastest growing cheer program in Northern Illinois. **Flip Flop & Cartwheel Clinics** – always popular; **Turning Pointe Competitive Dance Teams**; new this year – the **Martial Arts Class** and **Young Rembrandts Arts Program**; camps offer high quality activities during summer and school breaks including our **Young Explorers Day Camp** (ages 3 – 6)... a 12,000 square foot facility, housing in-ground trampolines, rod tumbling strips into a foam training pit, competitive size cheer floor, beams, bars, and a fun castle... two dance studios, a piano studio, and Pro-Shop with gym and dance apparel, and even bleachers for your comfortable, convenient viewing.

**\$5 Off any session or camp**

For a complete listing of current "deals" visit [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop); terms and conditions of "deals" subject to change as desired by individual participating businesses.

# Living Rooms



## An Opportunity for Energy Savings

Living rooms are home to most of the electronics in our house. We watch TV, turn on the computer, answer the phone, and from time to time take a meal or two all in our living rooms, and the costs add up, even when those electronics are off. The living room is ripe for other energy-saving measures as well, especially if it has multiple windows, a fireplace, or several air vents.

### What you can do:

- 1) Turn off the TV when no one is watching.
- 2) Use the sleep function on electronics, which can reduce their energy usage up to 60 percent.
- 3) Unplug power adapters and chargers when cell phones, digital cameras, and laptops are done charging.
- 4) Make sure air vents and registers aren't blocked by furniture or drapes.
- 5) Open window coverings during the day (winter months) and close at night. Reverse in the summer.
- 6) Shut the flue on your fireplace when not in use.
- 7) Weatherstrip windows.
- 8) Plug electronics into a power strip (surge protector). Group electronics into different power strips and flip the switch on the strip off when you're not using them.



### Energy Efficiency

### Tip of the Month

Check your outside dryer exhaust vent. Make sure it opens and closes freely. If it does not close tightly, cold outside air is getting into your house through the dryer.



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