

Old Natural Gas Connectors Pose Potential for Danger



Can you guess which natural gas connector needs to be replaced? If you picked the third one, you're right. That's an uncoated brass connector that should no longer be used. The others, from left, are: coated brass connector, coated stainless steel connector and an uncoated stainless steel connector. Any of these three are safe to use.

The old natural gas stove in your kitchen might still bake the best cookies, but there's a chance it might have an outdated—and dangerous—connector.

Uncoated brass connectors haven't been used in more than 20 years because they can easily crack or break, which could cause a gas leak, explosion, or fire.

"These older brass connectors have a serious flaw in how their tubing was joined to their end pieces," according to information from the

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. "Over time, the end pieces can separate from the tubing. The older these connectors get, the greater the possibility of failure."

If you suspect your older appliance might have one of these connectors, the CPSC recommends that you have a qualified professional inspect it. If an older connector is found, the professional will replace it with either a plastic-coated brass connector or a new stainless steel connector.

The CPSC warns people not

to move the appliances themselves because even slight movement could release natural gas into the room and create a hazardous situation. If you suspect a gas leak, leave the house immediately and don't use anything electrical. Once outside, call Rock Energy Cooperative at 608-752-4550 or toll-free at 866-752-4550 from your cell phone or a neighbor's house.

Here's another tip from the CPSC: Always replace natural gas connectors whenever an appliance is replaced or moved to another location.




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More Power to You

Electricity: A Tremendous Value

By Shane L. Larson,
Chief Executive Officer

As we head into the New Year, many of us will review how we spent our hard-earned cash in 2009 and perhaps take a fresh look at our budget.

Maybe you're a bargain-hunter who searches stores for January sales. Well, there's one bargain that you won't have to shop around for because it's always a good deal. Not only that, it's delivered right to your home—24 hours a day all year-round.

You probably guessed that I'm talking about electricity. Granted, the cost of electricity has increased over the years along with everything else. But its cost has not gone up as much as some other necessities.

The chart on this page shows that the cost of electricity has risen an average of 3.5 percent annually in the past 10 years. During that same time, bread and juice prices increased 4.7 percent, eggs are up 5.6 percent, and gasoline jumped 8.1 percent.

Electricity is so much a part of our daily routine that we usually take it for granted without stopping to think what a tremendous value it really is. Electricity powers the alarm clock that wakes us up in the morning and the coffee pot that helps us start our day. We use it to refrigerate our food, prepare our meals, and keep us warm.

We come home from work during winter when daylight is scarce and flip a switch to brighten our homes. We rely on electricity to entertain us when we turn on the TV or power up the computer. Electricity also provides light for all the family activities that take place during the evening.

Volts times amps equals watts, the units of measure on which electricity is billed (actually in kilowatts, which is a thousand watts). A watt has been defined as the rate at which work is done. That's what electricity does for you—it works, and it never stops working.

Like the mighty watt, we at Rock Energy Cooperative work hard to make sure that you can take electricity for granted and that you get the most value for the money you spend with us. Rock Energy members pay an average of \$3.07 a day for electricity to run their appliances, light their homes, and power their electronic devices and all the other countless electrical devices found in homes and businesses.

As you look at your 2010 budget and compare the price of items you routinely buy with the cost of electricity, you'll realize that electricity is a good value. Take a look at this list of other items you could buy for the same amount of money it costs for a day's worth of electricity.

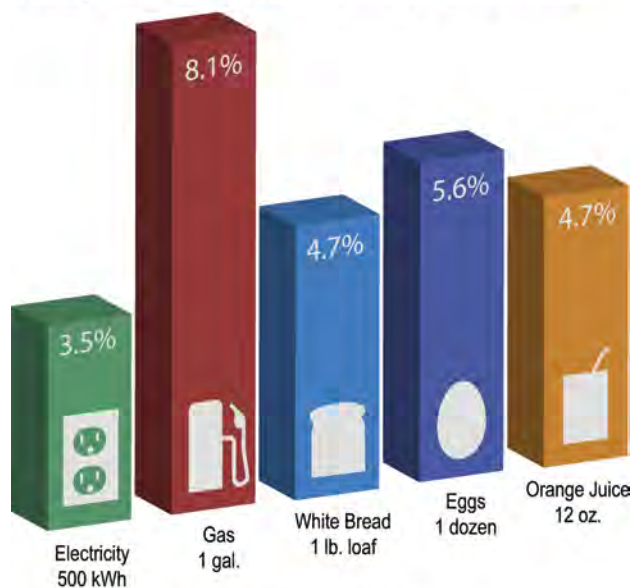
- A kids' meal at a fast-food restaurant
- Popcorn at a movie theater
- A latte at a gourmet coffee shop
- A frozen pizza
- One pound of round steak
- A box of cereal

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Electricity Remains a Good Value

Electricity continues to be a bargain, especially when compared to other consumer goods. As demand for energy rises and fuel prices increase, Rock Energy Cooperative is committed to providing safe electricity at the lowest possible cost.

Average annual price increase over the past decade:



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; NRECA



New Meters Automatically Record Power Use

The electric meter outside your house is the last part of electricity's journey along Rock Energy Cooperative lines before it enters your home's wiring system.

The meter not only carries the electric current into your home, but it also measures how much electricity you use in kilowatt-hours. A kilowatt is 1,000 watts of electricity used for one hour. For example, a 100-watt bulb burning for 10 hours equals one kilowatt.

Rock Energy has about 16,200 residential electric meters. Check outside your home, and you'll find either a solid-state electronic meter, which displays electricity use on a digital display similar to a vehicle's odometer, or an electromechanical meter, which either has a digital display or a series of dials. Both are extremely accurate. Automated Meter Reader (AMR) technology can be added to both types of meters so a member's power use is transmitted directly to Rock Energy without the need for manual meter reading. A meter with the AMR technology added costs about \$100.

Lynn Maier, north operations manager, said Rock Energy started adding AMR technology to mechanical meters in its Wisconsin territory about 10 years ago and began using solid-state electronic meters about five years



Current Connections is a regular feature that highlights the basic equipment and procedures that Rock Energy Cooperative uses to provide electricity to members. This month's article focuses on the residential meter.

ago. The mechanical meters are being phased out as new services are installed and the old meters need replacing. The average life expectancy of a meter is about 25 years.

About a year ago, Rock Energy started installing electronic meters in its Illinois territory. They are capable of recording both electrical use and natural gas consumption.

The AMR technology helps Rock Energy identify power outages, conduct preventative maintenance, and detect tampering. Co-ops have embraced the new technology. In fact, an assessment by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission found that electric co-ops have the highest deployment of AMR technology of any group of utilities in the nation. Rock Energy has been using the

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Solid-state electronic meter



Electromechanical meter

The electric meter outside your house shows how much electricity you use on a digital display similar to your car's odometer or with a series of dials.



Rock Energy Cooperative helped Rockton celebrate its 25th annual Christmas Walk by participating in the Lighted Christmas Parade on Dec. 5. Employees and their families walked alongside two decorated bucket trucks and tossed candy to the crowd lined up on Main Street. Participating in the parade were, from left, Jack Slaback; Zachary, Matt, and Amanda Mortimer; Rod and Edy Jo Magnuson; LeAnn, Kianna, and Tim Brantner with Mya, the puppy. Not pictured: Meredith, Maureen, and Michael Risum.

New Meters

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technology for more than 10 years. In comparison, Alliant Energy just started using it in Rock County last year.

Whether you have a meter with dials or one with a digital display, you probably don't have an actual meter reader coming to your house once a month. Both types of meters are capable of automatically transmitting readings to Rock Energy. Only a small percentage of co-op meters are still read manually.

Meter readings are recorded from month to month for billing purposes, and the difference in the readings accounts for how much electricity you consumed in a particular month and affects that portion of your bill. If you have Internet access and have signed up for eBill, you can log on to www.rock.coop to view charts that show your monthly average cost and power use as well as the daily average cost and use for each month.

Rock Energy Cooperative is committed to providing members with reliable, affordable, and safe electricity. It's important to remember that electricity is dangerous and can be deadly. It's also dangerous and illegal to tamper with your meter. The new AMR technology allows the cooperative to easily detect if a meter has been altered. In addition to criminal charges that will be filed, the co-op also charges a \$200 power theft fine. ■



Last Chance...

Jan. 8 is the deadline to apply for Rock Energy Cooperative scholarships for 2010. Go to www.rock.coop/member/scholar.html for details.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Federal tax credits are available for home energy efficiency improvements, including windows, doors, water heaters, and HVAC equipment for existing homes. For details, visit energystar.gov/taxcredits.

Source: Energy Star

More Power to You

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As a cooperative member, you're getting an even greater value. Investor-owned energy companies must deliver dividends to their stockholders. But co-ops are cost-of-service providers, and our electric rates are below the industry average.

Our goal at Rock Energy is to make sure that your electricity bill stays affordable. We have joined co-ops throughout the nation in the Our Energy, Our Future campaign. The grass-roots movement engages co-op members in a conversation with elected officials about how the country can meet climate change goals while keeping electricity affordable.

During the past few months, many of you have signed postcards to your senators asking them to pursue fair, affordable, and achievable climate change goals. So far, senators have received more than 600,000 postcards from co-op members across the nation.



And guess what? Our senators seem to be listening. A total of 14 senators, including Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold of Wisconsin and Roland Burris of Illinois, have criticized elements of the Senate bill that would hurt their states disproportionately. Midwestern states, which rely mostly on coal to produce electricity, would be hit the hardest. They would have to acquire more permits to comply with the law's provisions, resulting in costs that would be passed on to consumers.

It's not too late to join the Senate postcard campaign. We have postcards available at both our Janesville and South Beloit offices. All you have to do is stop in and sign them. We'll drop them in the mail to make sure your voice is heard.

We consider it a privilege to serve your energy needs, and I encourage you to let us know if we can do anything to improve our service to you. ■

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Bowling, bar, and banquet room. Your Family Fun Center!
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Personalized service, weekly sales, and continuous markdowns. Providing a wide variety of new and gently used, plus-size clothing at affordable prices in a comfortable and friendly atmosphere. Our consignors always receive the greatest monetary return on their gently used items. Dedicated to plus-size women who want to feel beautiful in what they wear as well as comfortable where they shop.

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Complete hair and nail salon. Specializing in all types of hair; featuring cuts, perms, and weaving. Service Is Our Business.

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Blackhawk Auto Sales – South Beloit, IL – (815) 389-3266

Auto repair, new /used tires, and exhaust.

10% Off Labor

For a complete listing of current deals, visit www.rock.coop. Terms and conditions subject to change as desired by participating businesses. You also can use your Co-op Connections Card to receive a discount on prescription drugs.



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